

A

VINDICATION

OF THE

MIRACULOUS POWERS,

Which Subsisted
In the THREE FIRST Centuries of the
CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

IN ANSWER to
Dr. Middleton's Free Enquiry.

By which it is Shewn,
That we have no sufficient Reason to believe,
from the Doctor's Reasonings and Objections, that
no such Powers were continued to the Church, after
the Days of the APOSTLES.

With a PREFACE,
Containing some OBSERVATIONS on Dr. MEAD's
Account of the Demoniacs, in his New Disc.
intituled, MEDICAE SÆCULÆ.

By THOMAS CHURCHMAN, M. A.
Vicar of BATTERSEA, and Prebendary of ST. PAUL'S.

ΕΙΘΕ ΟΤΙΝ ΚΑΙ ΑΠΟΕ ΤΗ ΑΥΤΗΝ ΟΛΙΓΟΤ ΔΕΙΝ
ΕΝΑΤΤΟΥ ΕΠΕΛΑΘΟΜΗΝ ΟΥΤΩΣ ΓΑΡ ΕΝΕΛΑΤΟΝ.
ΚΑΙ ΤΟΙ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΕΙΣ ΕΝΕΛΑΤΟΝ ΕΠΕΛΑΤΟΝ
ΕΙΡΗΚΑΣΙ.

Plot. Apol. Secretis.

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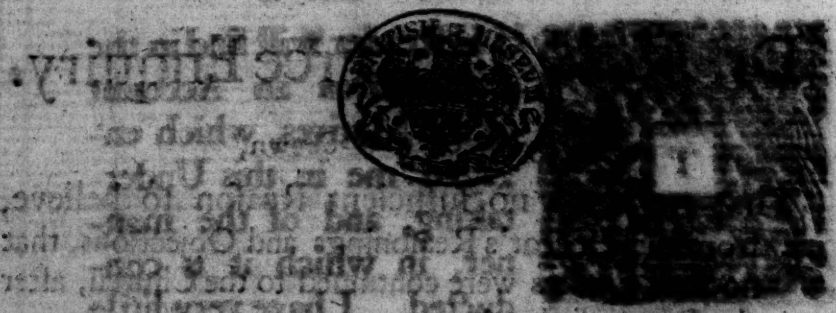


MIRACULOUS POWER

W. H. B.

PREFACE

IN ANSWER TO




more to add here about the Work itself. I
 was finished, a few Additions only excepted,
 before I had seen either of the Pieces which
 have been already published against the A-
 gency. It is no part of my Design to de-
 bate from the Merit of these. I have since
 read them with Pleasure, and in a spirit
 of friendship to me, as well as a Conviction of
 my own Judgment and Sentiments to find
 that we have to frequently made use of the
 same Reasonings, and that I differ from them
 in nothing material. I have therefore
 to the present Argument: Nay I must say
 by acknowledg'd, that in some few Particulars

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T H E
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THE Reader will find in the *Introduction* an Account of the Motives, which engaged me in this Undertaking, and of the manner, in which it is conducted. I have very little more to add here about the Work itself. It was finished, a few Additions only excepted, before I had seen either of the Pieces which have been already published against the *Enquiry*. It is no Part of my Design to derogate from the Merit of these. I have since read them with Pleasure; and 'tis a Satisfaction to me, as well as a Confirmation of my own Judgment and Sentiments, to find, that we have so frequently made use of the same Reasonings, and that I differ from them in little or nothing considerable; that relates to the present Argument: Nay, I must fairly acknowledge, that in some few Particulars

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they had carried the Argument farther than I had done ; in which Cases I have taken the Liberty to borrow some of their Words, or to refer to them for a farther Explication of the Points.

After such a Confession, the Publication of the following Papers may be thought unnecessary. I have only to say this for them, that they contain, upon the Whole, a much fuller Answer to the *Free Enquiry*, and a much more distinct Vindication of the Fathers of the three first Centuries, than has hitherto appeared. And, however satisfactory the Tracts of the other Gentlemen have been, so far as it suited their Inclination or Leisure to go ; it may be presumed, that many have wished, and will be glad, to see the Doctor's Work more minutely examined, and his unfair Quotations, and false Reasonings, more largely opened and exposed to View. And the Author has had the Pleasure of receiving the Approbation of some eminent, learned, and judicious Persons, who have taken the Trouble of revising these Papers, and advised him to offer them to the World.

There is a Passage or two in the *Introductory Discourse*, upon which as I have not remarked in its proper Place, it may not be unfit to do it here. It relates to our great Reformers in King *Edward the Sixth's* Time. The Doctor cannot deny their Regard to

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the Primitive Fathers ; but he endeavours to account for this in the most unkind and invidious manner. After having insinuated, that they were, in the preceding Reign, the Tools of a conceited King, he observes, that when they were at Liberty to carry the great Work of Reformation on to Perfection, “ yet, “ for the sake, either of their former Con- “ duct and Prejudices ; or to preserve a “ Character of Constancy ; and to give the “ least Scandal to the Clergy ; — they en- “ deavoured, as far as they were able, tho’ “ sometimes by forced and unnatural Con- “ structions, to justify all their Proceedings “ by the Example and Usages of the an- “ tient Fathers.” For such a Sentence no doubt the Gentleman will have the Thanks of all Roman Catholics, to whom he has very needlessly and unadvisedly given up the important Point of Antiquity. — We cannot but see here the most unfavourable and unjust Construction put upon the Conduct of the earliest Martyrs and Champions of our Church. But has the Author the Gift of looking into their Hearts so long after their Death, thus to pronounce upon their acting on such low and unworthy Motives, as he has here been pleased to assign ? Could he not suppose it possible for such great and good Men to proceed in this Matter upon Principle and Conviction ? Surely they, who actually conquered so many other Pre-

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judices,

judices, and shewed so much Strength of Resolution and Piety, may be thought above being influenced in that manner. And their noble Defences of their Cause from the Antients, to whom however they attributed no more Authority * than was due to them, farther prove, that they went upon the best Grounds, and acted wisely, as well as consistently.

P. 54.

Again, this Gentleman mentions it as another Circumstance, which keeps up our Regard for Ecclesiastical Antiquity, that this "is mostly on the Side of the Established Church," in Disputes about Points of Discipline, and Forms of Worship. Now we may *rather* be said to approve of the Methods settled among us, because they are most agreeable to the Primitive Pattern, than to reverence the Fathers, because they justify such Methods. — We are farther told, that "the Church will always be disposed to support that Authority, which helps it to depress a Set of Men, who — are yet more odious than the Papists themselves to all the zealous Advocates, and warm Admirers, of the Primitive Fathers." The Tendency of all this is plain enough.

* Bishop Ridley said in the Disputation, "I take and esteem not their Words [the Doctor's] for the Words of Scripture. — I account not these Mens Reports so sure as the Canonical Scripture." Fox, vol. iii. p. 70. So Bishop Latimer. See p. 85.

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Court is here paid to the Gentlemen of the Separation, at the Expence of the Communion of which he is a Minister. And all who oppose him in this Scheme are to be blackened as Enemies to the Dissenters. I think verily, this Gentleman would take it very ill to be so treated.

That the Church of *England* should endeavour to support herself, and to defend that Form of Government, which she has Reason to think apostolical, cannot be wondered. It may more reasonably be wondered, that any in her Communion, much more any of her Ministers, should not think it their Duty, constantly and zealously to assert and maintain the same against all Opposers. And this is the only way of *depressing* any of the Dissenters, which we plead for, or use. Persecution we desire none. And God forbid, that their Persons should be *odious* to us, on account of their Principles! This Supposition, I hope, is quite groundless. A Dislike of the one sure does not, need not, infer any Hatred of the other.

Neither is our Author's Assertion true, that they are more odious than the Papists to *all* the zealous Advocates, &c. Were they so to Archbishop *Wake* and Dr. *Waterland*; whose Regard for the Fathers this Gentleman himself will not question, and whose Moderation to the Dissenters was never doubted? And may not many more be men-

tioned, and supposed, who think with them ; who do not put Points of Discipline, and Points of Faith, on a Level ; at least who judge all Comparisons between different Opposers invidious and useless ; and who content themselves with admiring, and adhering to, the excellent Church they have the Happiness to be Members of, in Opposition to all Extremes whatever ? Assuredly there are, and this on the very Account of Antiquity, which they have Reason to think, in the main things, intirely with them.

But are the Dissenters in general Enemies to the Fathers ? I believe not. I shall add the Words of a very learned and judicious Man among them, who, I hope, speaks the Sense of by far the greater Part. In the same Paragraph in which he professes to *adore the Fulness of Scripture*, he says, “ I
“ see all Parties would be glad to have them
“ [the *Antenicene* Fathers] on their Side :
“ And I confess it affords me a sensible Plea-
“ sure to observe, that the Scripture Do-
“ ctrine in this momentous Point [the *Trini-*
“ *ty*] was so long preserved pure and uncor-
“ rupted in the Christian Church. I cannot
“ bear, that the Memory of Persons emi-
“ nent for Primitive Zeal and Holiness
“ should be treated with Contempt ; as their
“ other Accomplishments were far from be-
“ ing contemptible, so the real Proofs, that
“ they gave of their Love to Christ, and His
“ Truth,

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“ Truth, by *resisting even unto Blood*, oblige
“ us to honour and esteem them *.”

In the following Treatise, I have endeavoured to give Dr. *Middleton* as little room to complain as possible. I have every-where treated him as a Christian, and only pointed out to his View, and that of the Reader, the unguarded and offensive Passages of his Book, which have led the Author of the *Letter* to him, to consider him altogether as a Deist concealed; a Censure or Suspicion, which he is surely obliged to purge himself of. However, I must observe, that as some of the Reasonings and Instances, which he has produced, are capable of being pushed farther, than he has carried them; so they actually have been pushed farther, and the most pernicious Consequences have been drawn from them. In a Volume of *Essays* not long since published, there is one on the Subject of *Miracles*. The Design of it directly is to attack their Evidence, and to set aside the Belief of them universally. To this End, we see much the same Arguments from Nature and Experience, which the Doctor has obscurely dropped in his *Preface*, more largely opened, and strongly insisted upon: We see also the pretended Miracles of the *Abbé de Paris* applied to invalidate all Miracles. I cannot say, that the Doctor had seen this Tract. Yet surely

* Mr *Alexander's* Essay on *Irenæus*, Pref.

he is concerned to prevent, by proper Guards and Explanations, the very ill Use, which the Enemies of Religion will make of such dangerous Insinuations and Reasonings. And I wish I could provoke him to employ his good Abilities in answering and refuting this *Essay*, which would give him an Opportunity at once to vindicate himself, and also the Faith and Authority of Miracles *in general*, from the Sophistry, which runs thro' it.

On looking over some of the Tracts published in Defence of Dr. *Middleton*, I find one Distinction much insisted upon, which altogether escaped me, when I was drawing up my Remarks on his Book, and which I could never imagine would have been insisted upon. Weak, however, as it appears, it may be proper to take some little notice of it, to prevent any Triumphs on this Account. The Pretence is, that the Subject of the *Enquiry* is only such Miracles, as are said to be continued to the Church, *i. e.* such as God is said to have worked by the Agency or Instrumentality of any Christians after the Apostles; and does not include, nor relate to, any extraordinary Acts of Divine Power, which God is said to have worked by Himself, and by which He may be supposed, on any great Occasions, worthy of His Wisdom, to have suspended or reversed the Laws of Nature. The Doctor's Treatise is represented as confined to the View of the first of these, and not to have meddled with the last. If

If I remember right, we had some such Observation from the Author of the *Remarks, &c.* But the *Letter in Defence of Dr. Middleton* places a Stress upon it, and allows the Truth of some Miracles, after the Days of the Apostles, of the latter kind. And Mr. *Toll* also says, that the Doctor was no way concerned with such as these, and lays down the above Distinction as obvious and useful. *Def. p. 33.*

As I said before, the Distinction never once occurred to me. Nay, it now appears to be an Evasion or Subterfuge, which I can scarce think the Doctor intended at first. In the Titles of both the *Introductory Discourse*, and the *Enquiry*, the Words to have *subsisted in*, and to have *continued to*, the Church, seem to be put down as equivalent, and to denote any miraculous Powers then related to have existed, of what kind soever. And in the *Enquiry* we find some Accounts of Miracles attacked, which are represented to have been done, without any Intervention of Men. So that the right Question might well be supposed to be, whether we have Reason to believe the Accounts of *any* extraordinary or miraculous Powers, after the Death of the Apostles?

However, if these Gentlemen, and particularly the Doctor himself, with whom alone I am engaged, is resolved to abide by the Distinction above; let him tell us plainly,

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ly, as I think he should have done in the Entrance of his Book, whether he is ready to admit such Miracles of the Primitive Church, as God is said to have worked by Himself without any visible Instruments. We shall thus secure the Belief and Credit of several very conspicuous and important Facts, after the Apostles, which are truly miraculous, and could only proceed from His extraordinary Power and Interposition. And this will pave the way for our Belief of other Miracles, which are well attested. For, if He was pleased to give fresh Instances of the one sort, I see no Reason, why we should deny or doubt the Reality of the other. Our insisting on both is therefore pertinent. The Occasions, the Ends, the Uses, and the Evidences of both, may be easily conceived to be the same. The Continuance of the one in the Christian Church appears a Presumption of that of the others, and itself renders them more probable.

Accordingly, as we find in Scripture several Instances of both; so, I think, the Knowledge of those, which were worked immediately by God Himself, gives us a strong Confirmation of the Truth of those, which were worked by the Ministry of His Servants. For Example, if the Wonders of *Moses in Egypt* and the Wilderness could be thought to want any Support; they must receive it from the Consideration of *God's* miraculously

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raculously shewing Himself in the burning Bush, and on Mount *Sinai*, with Thunderings, and Lightnings, and Voices. That these last proceeded from Him, and not from any human Arts, or diabolical Powers, cannot once be questioned. The same also may be said of the Miracles of *Elijah*.--The Scheme therefore of the *Enquiry* must be, either directly or indirectly, concerned in examining and disproving ALL Miracles after the Apostles. Nor will the Distinction mentioned above sufficiently defend it. And this is enough to say of it, as it is very far from prejudicing my Argument; especially, as I have followed the *Enquiry*, and mentioned very few Cases, which had not been mentioned in this Treatise.

The Remainder of this Preface must be dedicated to the Consideration of another Author, of the most different Turn and Character; who hath shewn much more Candour and Concern for Religion, and therefore deserves a quite different Treatment. I had no sooner finished the *Vindication*, than Dr. MEAD's new Book, intituled *Medica Sacra*, came to my Hands. In this he treats of the *Demoniacs*, sets aside all Supposition of diabolical Agency, and reduces these Cases to Madness, and the Epilepsy, which sometimes attends it. As this is directly contrary to the Principles and Opinions of the Fathers, which are here defended; it will be

be necessary to obviate the Force of the Prejudice, which so *Great* a *Name* may possibly raise; and the learned Doctor will, I hope, excuse me, if I declare myself unconvinced by what he has urged on this Subject, and offer a few Reasons to justify this Declaration. And indeed I cannot but think, that I should be wanting in due Respect to this learned Writer's Character, as well as to my Subject, if I should continue to maintain the old Supposition, and take no notice of what he has now offered to the World to disprove it.

I would by no means be understood to dispute any Point with the Doctor, which belongs to the Profession, in which he has so long distinguished himself. Without doubt he must be a very good Judge of, what I make no Pretensions to understand, the Nature of common Distempers, and the Ways of removing them. But the Question before us is of another kind; whether the Instances mentioned in the Gospels and early Fathers were *common* Cases; whether they are not constantly represented therein, as caused by *Demons*, or evil Spirits; whether therefore we can justly exclude these from being concerned in them?

This is a *Theological* Point, in which a Clergyman may decently interfere; which it is indeed his Province to examine; and which his Ignorance in *Physic* will not disqualify him

him for determining. And the Discussion of it with the Doctor will be much the shorter and easier, as his Manner of writing is that of a serious zealous Christian; and therefore he is concerned, as much as we are, to reconcile his Scheme to the Accounts of the Evangelists; and, if this cannot fairly be done, to give it up as indefensible. For a right Belief of Scripture cannot be consistent with our holding any Opinions about this Matter contrary to what is there declared; or with imagining, that Language naturally and almost unavoidably leading Persons into Error is to be found in them; much less found constantly and invariably, and with a Detail of many Particulars, that can serve to no other Purpose, than to confirm the Error; which I conceive must be the Fact, if the Doctor's Explication be admitted.

He builds much upon the Authority of two p. 78.
Divines of our own Nation, and refers his Reader to them for farther Explication and Proof of his Point. But neither of these, nor indeed any modern Writers, can be of equal Authority in these Cases with the Apostles; who, besides their Inspiration, had frequent Opportunities of seeing them, and whose Veracity is unquestionable. — Mr. Mede is indeed a Writer of great Learning and Authority, in general. But if in the present Matter he agreed with the Doctor, we may say, that his Authority is the less, as he was
here

Works,
Ed. 1664.
p. 784.

here notoriously inconsistent with himself. If he has once endeavoured to shew the Scripture Demoniacs to be mere Madmen, he has elsewhere, as plainly as possible, declared the contrary. I shall only extract one Passage from him to this Purpose. But this one, I dare say, will be thought sufficient.

“ The Use of *Demon* in the worst Sense, or
“ directly for a *Devil*, will be *almost* con-
“ fined to the *Gospels*, where the Subject
“ spoken of being *Men vexed with evil*
“ *Spirits*, COULD ADMIT NO OTHER
“ SENSE NOR USE.

I mention Mr. *Mede* as inconsistent on this Article, merely on the Supposition, that he held the new Scheme, and wholly excluded the Agency of evil Spirits from his Notion of Demoniacs. But, on a closer View of his Reasonings, I cannot but think, that this Supposition is a Mistake; and that the Authority of this excellent Author is, upon the Whole, rather on our Side, than on the Doctor's. I do not find, that Mr. *Mede* any-where so much as hints, that the Demoniacs were not actuated by evil Spirits. He indeed supposes them to have been Madmen. But Madmen he supposes to have been thus actuated. His Words are plain and express.

Book i.
Disc. 6.

“ Such as these, I say, the Jews believed
“ (*N.B. AND SO MAY WE*) to be troubled
“ and acted by evil Spirits, as it is said of
“ *Saul's* Melancholy, that *an evil Spirit*
“ *from*

“ *from the Lord troubled him.*” I apprehend him therefore to have been in the contrary Extreme to his Relation the Doctor, and to have attributed more to the Power of evil Spirits, than we do, and not less. — In the same Discourse he disowns any Intention of affirming, that Demons are only Souls of bad Men. In the Passage cited above, he affirms the Gospel Demons to be Devils. And in this Light, all that he hath written on the Subject appears quite consistent. And perhaps, had he made any Change in his Opinion, he would have been rather induced, from Reverence to Scripture, to come into ours, which is indeed the middle one, *viz.* that the Demoniacs of the first Centuries were possess’d by Devils, and Madmen since are not; than from believing that all Madmen were possess’d, to think that none ever were. — It is plainly Mr. *Mede*’s Turn, not to represent fewer things as influenced by Spirits, than are commonly so thought, but more. He begins with the Instance of Comets, which he says are “ guided by an Angel of “ the Lord.” Here he supposes the Influence of Spirits to be overlooked by us, as likewise in the Case of Madmen. And, as to evil Spirits, towards the End he saith, that if the *Energumēnoi* “ were not such “ as we now-a-days conceive of no other- “ wise than as *Madmen*, surely the World “ must

“ must be supposed to be very well rid of
 “ Devils over it hath been ; ” *i. e.* compared
 with what it hath been ; “ which for my
 “ part I believe not.” So that his Sense
 is, not that Devils never did act in it, and
 cause Distempers, but that they do still.
 And with this Notion he was at Liberty to
 expound the Gospels about Demoniacs just
 as we do. And he must have thought, that the
 main Difference between Persons possessed
 then and now, was, that now we can’t
 disturb the Devils, as Christ and his Apostles
 did ; and, so, in this respect, *the strong*
Man armed keeps his Palace, and his Goods
are in Peace, Luke xi. 21. And probably
 this was understood formerly to be Mr. Mede’s
 Opinion ; and this bearing no Shadow of Op-
 position to Scripture, however in other Re-
 spects groundless, gave no Offence.

And thus far I have endeavoured to trace
 out this Gentleman’s Sentiments from the
 Discourse wrote purposely on this Point. In
 another Part of his Works, he employs
 several Chapters to shew the Notion of
 Demons ; the Substance of which, that we
 may have the Whole of his Sentiments in one
 View, it may not be improper to insert.

B. iii. c. 3. He tells us, that those “ in the Gentiles
 “ Theology were *Deastri*, or an inferior
 “ sort of deified Powers, as a middle be-
 “ tween the sovereign Gods, and mortal Men ; ”
 that, as to their Original, “ they were the
 “ deified

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“ *deified Souls of Men after Death;*” that,
 “ besides these Demons — I mean, besides
 “ *Soul-Demons* and *canonized Mortals*, their
 “ [the Gentile] Theologists bring in *another*
 “ *kind of Demons more high and sublime,*
 “ *which never had been the Souls of Men,*
 “ *nor ever were link'd to a mortal Body;*”
 that “ this sort of Demons doth fitly answer
 “ and parallel that sort of Spiritual Powers,
 “ which we call *Angels*, as the former of
 “ *Soul-Demons* doth those, which with us
 “ are called Saints.” And farther Mr. *Mede*
 owns, that the Scripture uses the Word De- c. 6.
 mon for Devil; that this is the only Sense
 of the Word in the Gospels; and that evil
 Spirits are worshiped under the Names of
 Demons, and deceased Souls, and hence
 called so.

In all this Account, there is nothing which
 directly contradicts the common Notion, but
 much that confirms it. And I thought it
 necessary to be thus particular, not only to
 vindicate so great a Writer from a supposed
 Inconsistency; but to prevent his Authority
 from being urged any more against the lite-
 ral Sense of the Scripture Demoniacs.

The second Writer on this Subject, referr'd
 to by Dr. *Mead*, is the Author of *The En-
 quiry into the Meaning of Demoniacs in the
 New Testament*, published not many Years
 since. This Tract occasioned a pretty long
 Con-

Controversy. Many * then engaged in Defence of the literal Sense, and in the Opinion of many learned Persons proved this to be the true one; answered the several Reasonings of the *Enquiries*; and, by a distinct View of the Relations and Passages of Scripture appealed to, shewed the new Interpretations of these to be wild and forced, and irreconcilable with the plain natural Sense of the Gospels, &c.

It may easily be imagined, that in an Hurry of Business the Doctor might not have read, perhaps not have heard any distinct Account of, or may not have remembered, the Tracts published against the *Enquiries*. Otherwise we can hardly suppose, that he would have recommended the Scheme of these, without taking the least Notice, that there had ever been any Opposition to it, or attempting to explain the many Difficulties, which had been urged against it. For, supposing him to be acquaint-

* Besides the Tracts I publish'd on this Occasion; Dr. Twells printed *An Answer to the Enquiry*, and *An Answer to the Farther Enquiry*. An anonymous Writer printed a Pamphlet, intituled, *Some Thoughts on the Miracles of Jesus*. Dr. Hutchinson, a Sermon preached before the University of Oxford; which he afterwards vindicated in a Pamphlet. A Gentleman of Wadham College put out a *Critical Dissertation concerning the Word Δαίμων and Δαιμονιον*. The Author of the *Thoughts on the Miracles* published afterwards *Remarks on the Review*. Mr. Pegge printed *An Examination of the Enquiry*, &c. I may also refer to three Sermons in Mr. Skeeler's Volume, and to Biscoe's Boyle's Lectures, Vol. I. p. 281 — 300, and to a Pamphlet of Mr Whiston's on this Subject.

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ed with these, and that we were not happy enough to convince him; it might, however, have been expected, that he would have shewn us more fully our Mistake; and if he did not care to enter anew into the Controversy, at least we might have hoped, that he would have obliged us with a better Interpretation of some of the principal Passages of the New Testament (that of the Devils entering into the Swine, especially) than the Author of the *Enquiry* had given us; or with a better Vindication of his Interpretations, than he had been able to make for himself.

But, far from this, the Doctor has not so much as set down the Places in the Gospels, which treat on this Point, with any Accuracy or Distinctness; but has laid before his Readers only a short, general, imperfect, and, in a Particular or two, mistaken, Representation of the Substance of what is said therein: From whence, if his Readers look no farther, it will be impossible to form a right Judgment on the Question. Thus he says, “*quinetiam a multis Dæmonibus obsessos se esse interdum clamabant, quos etiam ex se in alia corpora posse migrare credebant.*” *Nay, they sometimes cried out, that they were possessed with many Devils, who they also believed could go out of themselves into other Bodies.* And was it then only the Cry, the Belief, or the Imagination of the

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Madmen,

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Madmen, that many Devils had entered either into themselves, or into the Swine? Is this the Account the Scripture gives us?

However, not to dwell any longer on what the Doctor has omitted to do on this Occasion, let us consider with Attention the Force of what he has urged. And this I would do, as with all the Respect and Deference due to him, so with that Plainness, which the Truth, that, like its Great Author, knows no Respect of Persons, demands of all, who pretend to search after it, or hope for the Success of their Enquiries. Unless some real Addition of Strength and Advantage had been made to the Scheme, it would be most unreasonable in us to alter our Sentiments concerning it: In such Case, a Regard to any Man's Abilities or Character, whatever, could be nothing better than mere Partiality, and unwarrantable Prejudice.

The Preface contains a Reflection, which must not be overlooked. I need not make any Reply to what the Doctor says of the Exorcisms practised by the Roman Catholics, nor shall I give any Interruption to his deriding and exposing them. — But I cannot omit, that he mentions it as a Matter of his frequent Wonder, “that our principal Clergy
“so greatly contend for the bringing Demons
“upon the Stage, that the Divine Power of
“CHRIST may triumph in the Conquest of
“these infernal Enemies.” *Sæpe quidem mirari*

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mirari soleo, cur fidei nostræ antistites dæmonas in scenam producere tantopere contendunt, quo scilicet Divinum Christi Numen de victis his infernis hostibus triumphos agat.

There is no room to be surpris'd at this. They are not the Clergy, but the Scriptures, which have *introduced Demons*. We are obliged to abide by the literal Sense of these sacred Books, when there is no Necessity to depart from it; and to maintain and defend, at all Events, the plain natural Accounts we receive from them. This is the true and only Reason, which leads us to believe these Possessions, and to contend so earnestly for them; and this Reason, we apprehend and hope, will justify our doing so. There is sufficient Ground to be upon our Guard, and to put others upon their Guard, against all such lax and wanton Interpretations of Scripture, as, under Colour of Regard to them, would evade their Force, and explain them away; and as, if admitted, and encouraged, and imitated, might, in time, lead us to the disbelieving and doubting almost every Truth revealed therein.

This, I am persuaded, was never in the Doctor's Thoughts; and I believe, he himself will admit the Reason here assigned to be sufficient. To go on with his Reasoning: We are very ready to acknowledge, that miraculous Cures of *common* Diseases are a convincing Proof of the Power and Authority

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of Christ Jesus. And if the Scripture had mentioned no others, we should have been silent, and suspected no others; we should have had all Reason to have been satisfied with the sufficient Evidence, which God had afforded us. Yet, if there be any additional Advantage arising to the Argument from keeping close to the literal Sense of these Scriptures, and supposing, that the Power of Devils was visibly over-ruled and restrained by our Lord, while He lived upon Earth; I know not why we should forego it. And this, I think, has been shewn to be the Case. From hence, we have, in the first Place, the plainest Proof, that our Lord's Miracles were not wrought by any Assistance of Magic, or Diabolical Power; and consequently, that, being so notoriously superior to, and destructive of, the Operations of evil Spirits, they shew themselves to be truly divine *. And this is the Argument of our Saviour Himself, by which He vindicated these His Works from the malicious, absurd, and blasphemous Charge of the Pharisees. *If Satan cast out Satan, &c.* An Argument, the full Force and Propriety of which, as it stands in the Gospels, we may defy any Patrons of the new Scheme to explain.

And then, *secondly*, if Christ, besides curing Persons of Madness and Epilepsies in a

* See Reflections on Fleetwood's *Essay on Miracles*, passim.
miraculous

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miraculous Manner, which He did on either Supposition, farther shewed, that the most *virulent, obstinate, and powerful* Spirits were inferior to Him, and obedient to His Word; we have here a most undoubted, *additional* Display of His Divine Power. This I have endeavoured to shew in a former Tract, to which I beg leave to refer. Reply, p. 94, &c.

Let us now proceed to the Doctor's Book itself; and here he expressly owns, as *a Point certain, that it was the common Opinion of the Jews in our Saviour's Time, that evil Spirits frequently took Possession of Men, and in wonderful Ways most dreadfully tormented and distracted them.* "Id certum est, Ju- P. 66.

"dæorum animis iis temporibus vulgo in-
"sedisse opinionem, occupare sæpe homines
"malos genios, illosque miris modis excru-
"ciare, & quasi furiis agitare." The Truth of this Opinion he denies, and thinks it owing to their Ignorance of the Causes of some Distempers. But how is this proved? For Proof in such a Case must and will be required. This was the firm Persuasion of our Saviour, and His Apostles, if we are to interpret their Words at all consistently with the common Use of Language, indeed with common Sense; and we cannot suppose them ignorant of the Power of evil Spirits, or desirous of promoting a false Belief of their Power. It was embraced by St. Luke himself; to whom, *as a Physician, Dr. Mead*

will allow * peculiar Skill and Judgment in these Cases; and who, *as such*, was particularly concerned; was, according to this Gentleman himself, *under a Necessity of opposing vigorously this false Opinion*, had he thought it so. “Medici — falsæ isti
“opiniononi fortiter obistere necesse habue-
“runt.” P. 77. How then shall we be assured, that they were all mistaken, or meant differently from what they so plainly appear to express? There is nothing impossible, nothing improbable, in the Notion, that there are wicked Spirits; that they naturally have Power, and Inclination too, to torment and afflict Men; and that they may have been sometimes permitted by God to do so. It is no more repugnant to His infinite Goodness to suppose Men afflicted in this Manner, than by any other Means or Instruments whatever.

This in general I think cannot be doubted by Dr. Mead, as he seems to have allowed it in the Case of *Job*. “Ad probandam
“integritatem ejus, ut Satanas illum modis
“omnibus, salvâ tamen ipsius vitâ, affligeret,
“Jova permisisse dicitur.” p. 2. And more fully p. 8. “Non Jobum, aut Jobi amicos;
“sed ipsum libri hujus auctorem, calamita-

* Neque dubium est, quin Divus Lucas, et ipse medicus, vim utriusque vocis recte intellexerit. P. 107. This, tho’ spoke on another Occasion, is applicable here.

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XXV

“*tem hanc Satanæ acceptam referre.*” To try his Integrity, God is said to have permitted Satan to afflict him in every Way, only saving his Life. — It was not Job, or his Friends, but the Author of this Book himself, that referred this Calamity to Satan. The Reader is desired to observe, that the Opinion I have now contended for, is allowed to have been that of the Author of this Book, on whose Judgment more Stress is here laid, and very justly, than on that of Job, or his Friends. Surely the learned Doctor must be understood to intimate his Agreement with this antient and inspired Author. And I may on this Supposition ask, whether the Apostles and Christ Himself have not given as much Proof of their believing the Agency of the same evil Beings, as the Author of the Book of Job did? And therefore, why this Agency is not to be understood in the New Testament, as permitted by God?

But the Doctor, in order to shew the Error of such Opinions, gives us a large Account of Madness, and describes the usual Cause and Progress of it. He represents it P. 67, &c. as a Disorder of the Imagination, owing to too close an Attention to any particular Subject, especially if this be of great Consequence in Life; as setting all the Passions to work; as being attended with a remarkable Memory and Cunning in Points foreign to the Cause

Cause of the Disease; as being followed with Terrors, Anxiety, Anger, and Fury; and sometimes with Sorrow, and Trouble, and Love of Solitude. He tells us, that such unhappy Persons are often long-lived; that they can suffer Hunger, Cold, and other Inconveniencies, with great Ease, by reason of their bodily Strength; that often, after a long time, this Madness is succeeded by an Epilepsy, and then is incurable; and, according to the Difference in Mens Constitutions, that it makes them either furious or melancholy.

This is the Substance of this learned Gentleman's Description of these Cases. And I have no Thought of disputing the Justness of it. I can easily believe it to be as true, as I own it to be, in the Original, neat and elegant. — But what Conclusion can be drawn from hence? That the Scripture Demoniacs are nothing more than Instances of these *common* Disorders? Or, that the Accounts we have in the Gospels of evil Spirits being employed in possessing and tormenting them, and of their being cast out of them, are all Mistakes, or designedly so worded, as to sacrifice Truth to *Jewish* Prepossessions? Such an Inference would be by no means justifiable: And that for several Reasons.

1. It does not appear, that the *Jews* were wholly ignorant of the natural Causes of Madness, and the Epilepsy; or that they *al-*
ways

ways ascribed these Cases to the Power of Demons. Indeed they were authorized to think them sometimes Divine Inflictions. For it is threatened, *Deut. xxviii. 28. The Lord shall smite thee with Madness, and Blindness, and Astonishment of Heart* (παράπληξια, και αορασια, και εκτασει διανοιας, LXX.) Sometimes, again, they might with Reason think such Afflictions not Penalties for Sin, but the Effects of God's Permission, granted for Trial, or for unknown Reasons of Divine Wisdom, to evil Spirits; as in the Instance of *Job*. But Madness is frequently mentioned in other Places of both the Old and New Testament, by this common Name; without the least Intimation of its having any other than a natural Cause. And in three * Places the Word is translated by the LXX. *Epilepsy*. Therefore, when Devils are expressly mentioned, we have Reason to suppose the Cases uncommon, and not merely any such ordinary Distempers; which we see the *Jews* had no need to describe in this manner; and which they might know some other natural Ways of accounting for, notwithstanding any thing yet offered to the contrary †.

2. Tho'

* 1 Sam. xxi. 14, 15. 2 Kings ix. 11.

† Nay, tho' they had not been able to account for some Disorders of this kind, they might still suppose them to have a Foundation in the ordinary Course of Nature, when nothing appeared to shew, that they had none. Just as we do

2. Tho' we should suppose, that the Account given above of this Disorder would exactly suit the several Instances of Demoniacs in Scripture; and that every Symptom related of these would naturally and easily fall in with, and be included in, that Account; still it will not follow, that the Devil was no way concerned therein. He might nevertheless be the Author and Cause of these common Disorders. The Madness and the Epilepsy in these Cases might still be owing to him. Distempers, which may have natural Causes, it is very conceivable, may also sometimes be inflicted by this great Enemy of Mankind, and the cursed Spirits under him. Without good Warrant indeed we should be cautious of ascribing any such to these. But when I learn from Scripture, from whence we have the best, indeed the only good, Account of their Powers and Operations, that they have been concerned in inflicting them; this I must think sufficient Warrant, and believe it to be extremely right and just, to refer them to such Spirits. We need not indeed assert, that these have Power granted them, "*ut homines pro libitu suo furis exagitent,*" *to drive Men to Distraction, whenever, and in what*

P. 78.

do to this Day, with regard to several Diseases, the Origin of which, I presume, is in a great measure, if not entirely, unknown even to the most learned, which yet are not for this Reason ascribed to evil Spirits.

Manner

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Manner soever, they please. Undoubtedly, they are always under God's wise Restraint and Controul. And if they were always allowed to exert their natural Power, and indulge their mischievous Dispositions, it is most probable, that the World would be vastly fuller of Miseries and Torments, than we find it. But that they may have been sometimes permitted to bring Madness and Epilepsies, as well as other Distempers, on Men, is not difficult to conceive. The Instance of *Job* is here again obvious and apposite. We find, that the Doctor has described this Malady, as a *cutaneous Distemper*, a sort of *Leprosy*. This, in general, is owing to natural Causes. And yet the Doctor makes no Scruple to allow, that it is by the Author of the History himself ascribed to *Satan*, who is said, by the Permission of God, to have caused it. Nor indeed can I see, how the Scripture can be explained or believed, without referring this Case to him. P. 9, 101
P. 2, 3,

3. But it must be observed, that tho' some of the Disorders mentioned in the New Testament may be without Violence reduced to the foregoing Description of Dr. Mead; yet all cannot. To shew this at large, it would be necessary to go over the Instances particularly. But these have been severally examined in the Tracts published before. Not therefore to repeat what has been already urged, I shall only mention one

one Text in *St. Mark*; not as having greater Strength in itself to prove the Point than several others, but for a Reason which will presently appear. *No Man could bind him, no not with Chains; because that he had often been bound with Fetters and Chains, and the Chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the Fetters broken in Pieces; neither could any Man tame him.* No natural Strength, which may attend any Fits of common Madness, will account for such frequent Escapes, and so many unsuccessful Trials to confine this poor Wretch. Here I please myself with the Thoughts, that I shall have *Dr. Mead's* Concurrence. For, in his Description of the Methods of treating such Persons, he says, that *Torments and Stripes are the less necessary, because all Madmen are of such weak and cowardly Dispositions, that even such as rage most violently, if they are ONCE or TWICE bound, presently yield, and afterwards abstain, thro' Fear, from doing any Injuries.* “*Tormenta verò et plagæ ideo minus sunt necessaria, quod animi tam pusilli et imbellis sunt omnes insani, ut etiam acerrime furentes, SEMEL aut ITERUM vincti, quasi victi se dedant, & in posterum meticulosi ab injuriis inferendis desistant.*” Comparing these Accounts together, I own, I cannot reconcile them; and therefore must conclude, that they are not Accounts of one and the same kind

V. 3, 4.

P. 80.

kind of Disorder; and consequently, that there is something more in that related by *St. Mark*, than common Madness.

The Doctor proceeds to observe, that it P. 69, &c. is owing to our Ignorance of Physic, and of what daily occurs, that Men think the several Disorders, which happen to mad and epileptic Persons, impossible to be brought about by the Power of Nature. I know no one now, who thinks so; nor any Place or Time, in which this was generally held for a certain Truth. But we think the Relations and Descriptions of the Evangelists, in this Matter, absolutely irreconcilable with the Hypothesis, that here was nothing more than natural. And our Belief will not at all be weaken'd by that long List of many strange Cases, which this Gentleman has given us, that have been known in the World: As (not to omit the Consideration of any thing urged) that vehement Passions destroy Men. — A dangerous Distemper sometimes passes in a Moment from one Part of the Body to another. — The Venom of a mad Dog discovers itself after some Weeks or Months, and occasions Evils no less grievous than those of the Demoniacs. — Women with Child wonderfully impress some Marks of their unsatisfied Longing on the Foetus in the Womb: Nay, what is *prodigii instar*, some are born without a Limb, when the Mother had been suddenly

suddenly terrified with the View of another Person thus deformed. — False Images, as well as true ones, affect the Imagination ; as appears from Witches confessing their Compacts with Devils, and declaring what they never were guilty of, even tho' they were sure to die for such Confessions. — Melancholy Persons imagine their Heads made of Glass, or imagine themselves to be dead. — One Man thought himself with Child. — Two others, when alone, thought they heard Voices. — The same is the Case of such, as believe they see Spectres.

This is the Substance of three whole Pages of the Doctor's Book ; and we may allow it all. But the Reader must have far greater Sagacity, than I can pretend to, if he can see any Argument from hence to disprove the common Notion about Demoniacs. What if many surprising and unaccountable Things have happened, and still happen, in the World ? Will it follow, that the Possessions of Scripture, attended with such Circumstances, as the Penmen of it, writing under the Direction of Heaven, relate, were merely natural Disorders ? Or were of the same sort with these surprising Accidents ? Are the Instances mentioned by the learned Doctor parallel to these Possessions ? Are any of them attributed to *Demons*, thro' our Ignorance of their Causes ? Or, if the Power of Nature be sufficient

to

to work them, can we conclude, that it was sufficient to produce all the Circumstances related of the Possessed of the Devils? Were evil Spirits Creatures of the Imagination only? And, when the Scriptures mention these evil Spirits, as the Authors of such Afflictions, and mention also some amazing Consequences of their being cast out, such as could not have followed the Removal of any common Distempers, owing only to natural Causes; shall we not believe them in their plain literal Sense?

We are next told, that Mens Minds are P. 73. most disturbed with Fear, guilty Minds especially, with the Fear of Punishment; and that hence all Calamities were supposed to be sent as Punishments. — Which is a most undoubted Truth. But what Connection has it with the present Argument? It appears equally applicable to ordinary Distempers, as to extraordinary ones.

To go on with the Gentleman's Argument: That Idolatry began with worship- P. 74. ing the Sun, Moon, &c. and afterwards proceeded to the Worship of *Demons*, is true. In some Sense also, these might rightly be thought divine Ministers. But that they were originally the Souls of dead Men, is a Mistake. I have shewn in my *Reply*, that not even all the Heathens were of this Opinion; that even they acknowledged *Demons* both good and bad, which were of a *middle* Nature between Gods and Men*; and that

* This the Doctor may also see, in part, proved by his Kinsman Mr *Mede*, *ubi supra*.

this was probably owing to some traditionary Accounts of the Angels and Devils. And, with regard to the *Jews* and *Christians*, these have almost universally considered Demons as Devils. The Doctor, I trust, will not deny this of *Christians*; and he owns it of the *Jews*. — He says, that *they were wont to ascribe every thing wonderful in Nature to the Angels*. “*Judæi — siquid miri faceret natura, ad angelorum Supremi Dei ministrorum operam referre soliti.*” N. B. Many wonderful Things they certainly did ascribe to these celestial Beings, and very rightly. — And hence, it is said, *they could easily believe, that some great Diseases, the Causes of which they were ignorant of, proceeded from the Operations of evil Angels*. “*Facile in animum sibi inducere poterant, ut diras quasdam ægritudines, quæ mentem simul & corpus læderent, et quarum causas cognoscere nequirent, ab angelorum malorum ἐπερὴταις exoriri.*” And both *Philo* and *Josephus* are appealed to, as testifying, that the *Jews* thought there were evil Angels; and that these were *execrable*, and *altogether noxious*. It remains to be proved, that the Body of the *Jews* (whatever *Josephus* did) thought these the Souls of dead Men; and that their general Opinion concerning the Powers which God permitted them to exercise, was wrong and culpable. The Scripture, I am sure, much confirms it.

It

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XXXV

It should also be shewn, that the *Jews* attributed any great Diseases *universally*, i. e. *all Instances* of them, to evil Angels. Madness, we saw before, they sometimes mentioned, as a common Disorder; and indeed we cannot suppose, that it was a very unusual one among them. It is not sufficient to affirm, that they were then ignorant of the Causes of this, and such-like Distempers. This has not been proved: Neither will this alone account for their Belief, that, *in some particular Cases*, these proceeded from evil Angels. We cannot imagine them ignorant *in general* of the natural Causes of Dumbness, Blindness, or long Weakness; and yet, as the Doctor owns, some Instances P. 75, 76. of these also are attributed in the Gospels to Devils; and one in particular is thus attributed by Christ Himself. And, I think, he will never be able to prove, that our Lord spoke this in Compliance with the usual Language of His Age, the Truth and Propriety of which He did not believe. And if He gave Credit to the Supposition, it can be no Discredit to us to rest satisfied with the same. And, as to the *Jews*, it is, I apprehend, impossible to shew, that they referred *all Cases* of Blindness, Dumbness, Weakness, or perhaps any Disorder whatever, to Devils; any more, than that they were at all mistaken in thus accounting for *some* very remarkable Cases.

P. 26, &c. Dr. *Mead* insists upon the Disease of *Saul*, which he had before declared to be Madness of the melancholy Kind, referred by the *Jews* to the Power of evil Angels. I have given this Case a particular Consideration in my *Essay*; in which it is observed, that some learned Men have thought, that there was no Possession, strictly speaking, in this Case, and nothing more meant, than the ordinary Instigation of the Devil, or the evil Temper and Affections of his Mind; that, however, on a particular View of the History, it appears more probable, that his Disorder was owing to *Satan*, who, on the Spirit of The Lord departing from him, was permitted by God to seize and trouble him. The Difficulties objected against this Supposition were examined, and the Fitness of Music to *relieve* him (for he was not *cured*) shewn. On reviewing this so long after, I see no Reason to alter my Sentiments; nor has the learned Doctor urged any new Objections, which are of Consequence. He indeed observes, that *Diseases, which may be shewn to have natural Causes, do not seem to be rightly referred to the Anger of God,* “*Nisi diserte denunciatur illos divinitus immitti.*” *Unless it be expressly said before, that they would be sent by Him.* — Now we may not in all, nor indeed in most, Instances, know the Reasons, why God has suffered evil Spirits to take Possession of Men. And it appears to be Presumption, if not want

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want of Compassion and Charity, to suppose that this always proceeds from His Anger, and is inflicted by way of Vengeance and Punishment. — However, we need not fear to say, that *Saul's Disorder*, of what Kind soever it was, was the Consequence of God's Displeasure. The Text is very plain, *The Spirit of The Lord departed from Saul*, 1 Sam. xvi. 14. *and an evil Spirit from The Lord troubled him.* If the evil Spirit here denotes only Melancholy; yet this is expressly said to be *from The Lord.* It was sent by Him, as it had been deserved by *Saul.* And there can be no Difficulty in supposing, that God might permit an evil Spirit, nay, that He might here use the Ministry of such a one, to punish this disobedient King. As the Doctor acknowledges, that *He can, if He pleases, use the Power of natural Causes, as well as of good Angels, to bring any Evils on Men;* “*Deus ipse, si velit, tam causarum naturalium, quam bonorum angelorum virtute ad mala cujuscunque generis hominibus infligenda, uti potest;*” Why may He not also employ evil Spirits to execute His Vengeance? However, His Permission it will in general be sufficient for us to plead. And, to return to *Saul;* he might very reasonably have seen the Hand of God in his Punishment, and distinguished this from any common Event; tho' he had received no Threatning or Warning of it beforehand. And we have all Reason to believe

lieve it to have been *from The Lord*, as the sacred History assures us, tho' no such Menace is recorded. The Rule therefore, which the Doctor lays down concerning the Necessity of such previous Threatnings, to assure us of any Divine extraordinary Inflictions, is rather laid down too universally, and carried too far.

P. 29.

I have understood the Passage cited above in this Manner, because in the Conclusion of the Paragraph, the Doctor mentions *comminationes*, as well as *indicia, morborum*, Threatnings, as well as Symptoms, of Diseases, as necessary to justify our declaring these to be supernatural. — But if it should be said, that his Meaning is only, *unless it be expressly said, that they are sent by Him*, still my Argument is much the same; still this is true of the Case of *Saul*. It is expressly said, that the Cause of his Disorder was supernatural, *from The Lord*. And besides, the Circumstances shew the same. — Which Observation will also hold with regard to the *Demoniacs*. The Cause of their Disorders is mentioned *expressly* enough.

Another thing observed is, that *the Diseases, which are thus caused by God, are either incurable, or curable by Himself only*. — And this was most probably the Case here. For we do not find, that *Saul* was cured; and some temporary Relief it might please God to afford him, by the means of His Servant *David*, to prepare the

the way for the accomplishing His own Design of setting this Person upon the Throne of *Israel* after him.

It is owned, that the Power of *Demons* P. 76. 78. over human Bodies was believed both by *Jews* and *Gentiles*. That some Mistakes might be mixed with this Notion, is indeed probable. But, surely, we can hardly imagine, that there was never any Foundation at all for so universal a Belief. At least, this has not yet been disproved, and evinced to be groundless. Nothing hitherto offered has sufficiently shewn, that there are no such Beings as evil Spirits; that the *Scripture Demons* were not such; that these could have no Power over the Bodies of Men; that they were not sometimes permitted by God to exert and exercise it; that wise and gracious Ends of His Providence (whether known or unknown to us, it matters not) could not be answered thereby; or that the Relations and Accounts, which we have in Scripture, do not evidently suppose, and teach us, that there have been such Possessions, or can be fairly and soberly explained to mean any thing else.

When we see some substantial Proof of this Kind, it will be time enough to alter our Opinion, and give up the Cause. But till then, I think, we must, as Christians, be in all Reason obliged to adhere to the old Supposition; tho' there may be a few Difficulties attending it, owing to our Ignorance

how

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how such Things were done, or *why* they were for a certain Time only suffered. — And whether the Doctor's Pleas amount to such valid Proofs; whether he has made out any one of the Points here mentioned; the impartial and Christian Reader, having now before him the Whole of this learned Gentleman's Reasonings on this Subject, is left to judge and determine for himself.

And I shall no longer stop him from the Consideration of the *Free Enquiry*, the Book I principally intended to answer. Only I would beg leave to advise him, if he has Leisure and Opportunity to do it, to compare Dr. *Middleton's*, and my Quotations and Translations with the Originals. He will frequently find us differ in our Accounts. I shall not think it fair to trust his Representations, without Examination. Neither do I desire to be trusted any farther myself. The Question is chiefly a Question of Fact, which must be determined by Appeals to Ecclesiastical Antiquity. Here are our main original Evidences, by which the Point must be decided. Whoever would be a complete Judge of them, must make due Enquiry into them, and give them a Consideration. And I am so far from fearing the Success of such Enquiry, that I do not scruple to desire all capable Persons to make it: — And then,

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A

INDICATION
MIRACULOUS POWER
FIRST CHRISTIAN

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A
 VINDICATION
 OF THE
 MIRACULOUS POWERS

Which subsisted in the
 THREE FIRST CENTURIES.

INTRODUCTION:

Containing General OBSERVATIONS.

BEFORE I enter upon the Consideration of Dr. *Middleton's* Book, it may not be improper to let the Reader know the Motives which induced me to undertake the Task: I was not only influenced to examine this Subject, by a general Curiosity, which had been raised in the World by a Treatise on a Point so new and extraordinary, coming from a Gentleman of his known Learning and Ingenuity, and introduced in such a Manner to the public Notice: Besides these Reasons,

B

I

A Vindication of the

I had others of a more private and peculiar Nature. Some Years ago, I was concerned in a Controversy about the Meaning of the *Demoniacs in the New Testament*, and endeavoured, in some Pamphlets then published *, to support and justify the *literal Sense* of these. In order to this, I represented the similar Cases of this Nature, which occur in the *early Fathers*; and particularly in the *Apologies*; and laid the Stress upon these Accounts, which I thought they deserved.

When the *Free Enquiry* came out, it was natural to read it with an especial View to this Subject, and to examine more closely every thing which is here offered to set aside and overthrow these Testimonies. I could not doubt, but that the whole Strength of the opposite Cause would be found in this Treatise; and that if I had been in an Error, I should now be convinced of it. But the Result of this Search was very different. I found little more than groundless Assertions, and improbable Suppositions, advanced in Opposition to Facts very expressly and fully attested. This confirmed me in my former Opinion.

* An Essay towards vindicating the literal Sense of the *Demoniacs in the New Testament*. 1737.

A Reply to the *Farther Enquiry*, &c. as far as the Essay is concerned. 1738.

A short State of the Controversy about the *Demoniacs*; with a Vindication of the Reply, &c. 1739.

From

Miraculous Powers, &c.

3

From hence I was led to consider, with the same Attention, some of the other miraculous Facts mentioned in the early Writers, together with the Objections which the Doctor has urged against them. Here also, I own, I was unsatisfied. Many things occurred at first Sight in this Book, which appeared to be groundless and unjustifiable. And even the specious and plausible Parts of it could not stand a more near and accurate Enquiry. In a Word, I was soon persuaded, that the Whole, as far as it relates to the Three first Centuries, was capable of a fair Answer.

And being thus persuaded, I now propose to offer my Reasons to the World, and to do what Justice I can to the great Lights and Ornaments of the antient Church. I confine myself to consider the Three First Centuries; and shall take no notice of anything urged against the Fathers who lived afterwards. I have neither Books nor Leisure enough to go lower. As to the succeeding Miracles, I would not be understood to determine on one Side or the other, either for their Truth or Falshood. Many fabulous Accounts undoubtedly there were. But I do not assert, nor suppose, that all were such. The Defeat of *Julian's* Attempt to rebuild the Temple at *Jerusalem* is strictly defensible. And so may some others. However, to enter into Particulars, to make

A Vindication of the

the proper and just Distinctions, to separate such as are worthy of Credit from mere Fictions, and to vindicate the former; is a Work far beyond my poor Abilities, and must be left to Persons of far more extensive Learning, and of the exactest Judgment; if any such should think fit to undertake it.

It is sufficient to confute the *Enquiry*, if the Claims of the earlier Ages be made good. Most learned Protestants suppose, that Miracles were *in a great measure* withdrawn, when it pleased God to put an End to the Persecutions of the Church, and to turn the Hearts of the Emperors to embrace and protect Christianity. This is owned in the *Introductory Discourse*. However this be, yet, as almost all learned Men, both Papists and Protestants, are agreed in allowing the Miracles of the Three First Centuries; it will be material, in several respects, to consider the Objections against these, and to see, whether this Gentleman has disproved this general Opinion.

I cannot think it of Moment, to point out exactly the precise Time when Miracles utterly ceased. Most probably, these Powers were gradually withdrawn, in proportion as there was less and less Occasion for the Exercise of them. But, without assigning their final Period, which it may be very difficult, perhaps not possible, to do, we may know as much as is necessary. We may know the
Time

Times when they had not ceased: We may be now sure, that they have long since ceased. Our Ignorance, when the last true Miracle was worked, can be no Argument for our receiving the modern Pretences, the Falseness of which is otherwise fully proved; nor for our rejecting the antient Relations, which there are not other and much stronger Objections against admitting.

What the Consequences of the primitive Miracles are, if allowed, is no Part of the present Question, which relates wholly to the Fact, whether they are to be allowed, or not. We need not here enquire, how far this Circumstance will strengthen the Testimony of the Fathers, or confirm their Authority in other Matters. We attribute no *divine* Authority to them, nor admit them as our Rule and Guide; nor do we suppose, that they were honoured with miraculous Powers principally for *our* sake, or for the establishing of *our* Faith. However, the Use they are of to us will be still the same, whether we know, or not, how long Miracles were continued to the Church after their Times: So long as we can prove these to have continued, so long, at least, their Uses will continue; so long the Fathers will more clearly appear to be good Witnesses of the Doctrines and Discipline of their Times; so long these may be the better presumed, in all prime fundamental Points, to have held

the Truth. Nay, even on the Supposition, that Miracles then worked would prove, that we ought to follow them *in all things*; which no one will maintain; still we are not to follow them any longer, than the Reality of such Miracles evidently appears; and, whether we know the precise Time of their ceasing, or not, so far as this Reality appears, we must, on this Supposition, follow them. But this is only for Argument's sake. We hold no such Consequence of the Miracles of the First Ages, nor attribute any such Authority to these. And every Advantage we expect from either their Miracles or Authority, may intirely be secured, tho' we know not when such Powers stopped. Such Knowledge then can be of no Moment.

That there have been Claims to Miracles in all Ages of the Church, is true: For many Centuries we have Reason to suspect these Claims; or rather to be convinced of the Falshood and Imposture of them. Neither the Wonders themselves, nor the Occasions of them, nor the Attestations given to them, are at all equal or like to those of the early Ages. And hence, I apprehend, arises the Difficulty of fixing the exact Duration of true Miracles; tho' we need not be afraid of declaring, that the early ones were true. It is here, as with other Impostures. Falshood often succeeds in the Place of Truth. We may be able very clearly to see, in many Instances,

Instances, the Error of modern Notions; as also to discover, that these did not formerly prevail. And yet it is often extremely difficult to point out exactly the Time when they commenced; and we think it in general sufficient to ascribe them to Credulity, Superstition, Interest, Ignorance, &c. which have been found more and more to prevail, the farther we descend from the first and best Ages of the Gospel. To proceed,

When any Author offers a new Scheme, which is contrary to the general Opinion of the Christian World, it, I think, becomes him, whatever his Abilities be, to propose it modestly, and not to throw out random Censures and Accusations against all who have gone before him, and been of different Opinions. Novelties and Singularities of Opinion and Judgment are somewhat to be suspected, and should not be obtruded upon the World by Heat, and Violence, and Calumny, but submitted to the Consideration of learned Men, and left to make their own Way by degrees, as the Reason and Use of them shall appear. Nay, supposing such an Author ever so firmly persuaded of the Truth of what he advances, and also convinced, that he has hit on a better Way of answering some Difficulties, than had ever been known before; yet his Sincerity would not be hurt by leaving the old Arguments in their full Strength, allowing their just

Force, and giving his own Thoughts, as a farther Help and subsidiary Advantage to the Cause he professes to maintain. This Conduct becomes the Authors of all new Notions, and would be no Disadvantage to the spreading of these.

But it is very seldom, that such take these Methods. It is too usual for Men to be so fond of their own *Nostrums*, as to endeavour to make way for their Reception, by decrying and abusing all the old, sound, tried Ways of answering the same End. Thus Men are prejudiced against these, and left to others, whose Strength they cannot be immediately assured of, and the Utility of which no Experience has approved. And as it often happens, that these new Schemes fail, and are as soon rejected as they come to be well examined; the Consequence is, that the Minds, of weak ignorant People especially, are left in Uncertainty, not able to determine any thing: They are told, that the old Notions are false and wrong; and yet see, that the new ones too are exploded: And thus they throw off all Concern for these Truths, and even sometimes are tempted to take up with the very Errors, which the new Scheme was intended to answer.

There is a Deference and Respect, very different from a blind Credulity, due to Opinions generally received. An humble Man would be a little inclined to distrust a
Notion,

Notion, contrary to the Persuasion of the wisest and best of Christians in all Ages: Or, if he thought himself obliged to publish it, he would do this with Humility, and proper Apologies.

It is a disagreeable Reflection, that not even Dr. *Middleton* himself, whose Genius wants, as little as any Man's, these low Arts of introducing his Sentiments, is so free from them as we could wish. His Scheme is owned to be *new*, and *big with Consequences*. But Consequences he is "not so scrupulous perhaps in his Regard to, as many of his Profession are apt to be:" The Judgments of wise Men, of almost every wise Man before him, weigh nothing with him: And such as do not come into his Notion, and think with him on this Subject, to use his own Words, may "see what a sort of Character and Language is prepared for" them; and by the Insults which others have met with, who have given no other Offence that I know, but that of differing from him, may form a Judgment of what they are to expect for daring to do the same. No Protestant, he says, can defend the Fathers, "without contradicting their own Profession, and disgracing their own Character; or produce any thing but what deserves to be laughed at, rather than answered." But
no

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no real Friend of Truth is to be discouraged by any Difficulties of this Nature.

P. 2. In the *Introductory Discourse*, this Gentleman set out with making this Declaration: "If the Facts and Testimonies, which
 " obliged me to embrace it [this Opinion],
 " should not have the same Force, nor
 " suggest the same Reflections to others, I
 " shall neither be surprized nor concerned
 " at it: For it is every Man's Right to judge
 " for himself; and a Difference of Opinion
 " is as natural to us, as a Difference of
 " Taste."—He, in the next Page, speaks of "indulging the same Liberty [of declaring his Sentiments] to every body else." This seems fair. But, whether he was heated by Opposition, or what other Cause soever it is to be imputed to; I am sorry to observe, that the Spirit and Temper of the

Vid. Pref. *Enquiry* is very different. The Charges of *Prejudice*, *Bigotry*, and *Superstition*, are very plentifully thrown out against his Opposers. These are said to "have shewn a
 " great Eagerness indeed to distinguish
 " their Zeal, but a very little Knowledge of
 " the Question—urged by the Hopes of
 " those Honours, which they have seen
 " others acquire, by former Attacks upon
 " me; and, like true Soldiers of the militant Church, prepared to fight for every
 " Establishment, that offers such Pay and
 " Rewards to its Defenders." *This, good Doctor,*

Miraculous Powers, &c.

II

Doctor, is not Reasoning, but Railing, to use Letter to
Dr. Wa-
terland.
some Words I remember in a Pamphlet,

which I formerly read. It is *rash* and *uncharitable* Railing; unless you have the Power of knowing Mens Hearts, and seeing the secret Motives which sway and govern them.— We have yet more Dirt thrown: His Opposers are reproached with *A blind Deference to Authority — knowing no Distinction between Faith and Credulity, take a Facility of believing to be the surest Mark of a sound Christian.* — Again:

Pref.

“ I was never trained to pace in the Trammels of the Church, nor tempted by the Sweets of its Preferments, to sacrifice the philosophic Freedom of a studious, to the servile Restraints of an ambitious Life.”

Every one sees the Insinuations and Reflections contained in this Passage; and none but the Enemies of our Constitution can approve of them. In the Work itself we find not only some living Authors, who, by their Learning and Labours, as well as Examples, have deserved well of Christianity, treated with uncommon Scorn and Sneers; but that not even Mr. *Dodwell* and Dr. *Cave* escape some such Marks of his Regard, being reproached for a *sanguine Complexion*, and a *large Extent of Faith*. But Dr. *Waterland* is every-where particularly distinguished with the keenest Strokes of his Resentment. Nay, the Notion the *Enquirer* has

Pref. has set himself against, is called “ an inveterate Imposture, which, through a long Succession of Ages, has disgraced the Religion of the Gospel, and tyrannized over the Reason and Senses of the Christian World.”

I have collected some of these Flowers together here, that they may not retard us in the Prosecution of the Work; so that, whenever I meet with them, I shall pass over them without any Notice, as Words of Course.

And as to the Importance of this new System, it is represented as absolutely necessary to the Support of the *Protestant* Cause. The Belief of the *primitive* Miracles is represented as leading us directly to the Belief of the *Popish* ones. Very extraordinary truly! It is now above Two Centuries since the *Reformation* began. During this time, the most judicious and elaborate Defences of it have been offered to the World, by several Protestants of all Denominations. But no Persons have more distinguished themselves in this Dispute, than the Members of the *Church of England*; which have always borne an high Regard for Antiquity; an higher, as the Doctor himself acknowledges and complains,* than those of any other Protestant Church. The † noble

* See *Introduct.* p. 48, &c. † Reply to Mr. *Harding*. See also *Waterland's* Importance, p. 456.

Challenge of the great Bishop *Jewel*, whose *Learning* and *Judgment* our Author allows, p. 221. and his admirable Vindication of it, is alone an Honour to our Nation: As are also, not to mention any others, the excellent Tracts published against Popery in the Reign of the late King *James II.* These Authors all held those Principles, which this Gentleman thinks "must finally make ^{Introd.} us Papists." They were, it seems, all ^{P. 56.} inconsistent, all ignorant of the true Grounds of their Religion. The Glory of finding these out is reserved for the *Enquiry*. What others may think of such Pretences, I cannot say: For my own part, the bare Mention of them appears to me to be sufficient to expose them. There are many good Ways of distinguishing the Popish Claims from the Miracles of Antiquity. A wise Man may see Reason enough to reject the one, without rejecting the other. The former have been disproved over and over: The latter have hitherto maintained their Ground.

We need not then call in the Assistance of the new Scheme. Nay, I cannot be without Apprehensions, that this will be found unsafe and dangerous. It is making too great a Concession to the *Roman Catholics*, and giving them an undue Advantage over us, to yield, that the Defences of the Reformation have hitherto proceeded generally upon a wrong

wrong Foundation, and that most of their ablest Adversaries have been betraying and hurting their own Cause. And if, after all, some of the early Miracles should be defensible, which I believe will appear to be the Case, it is easy to see, that the Papists will eagerly catch at the Conclusion, which the *Enquirer* teaches them to draw; That therefore we must give Credit to the Miracles at present pretended to among them, and of consequence to all the Doctrines of their Church. This opens to them a much shorter and easier Way to prove the Truth of their Miracles, than any they had before. It will be much wiser and better to rest in our old Arguments. We have Ground enough to suspect, nay, to oppose, any modern Pretences of that Communion. Nay, we cannot put them on a Level with the Facts done in the primitive Ages, without doing too great Honour to the former, and great Injury to these. Farther, a general undistinguishing Suspicion is as hurtful to the Cause of Truth, and as favourable to the Designs of Superstition, as the blindest Credulity can be. Extremes naturally lead to each other.

It is probable then, that our Enemies the *Roman* Catholicks are looking on with Satisfaction at every such Novelty and Singularity of Opinion, which is started and advanced among us. They never fail to ob-

ject these; and I believe find such Objections more serviceable in making Converts and Profelytes, than all their Claims to Antiquity. On the Whole, it seems very dangerous to shift and change that Ground and Posture of Defence and Attack, in which we have so long come off Conquerors.

As to our other Enemies, the *Infidels*, these are not directly concerned in this Dispute. The Doctor has yielded and supposed the Genuineness of the Holy Scriptures, and the Truth of the Miracles recorded therein. And these Miracles must be owned to be sufficient Foundations of the Christian Faith, tho' we had no Accounts at all of any subsequent ones, or none, which we could vindicate and approve. The present Debate then must be carried on upon Christian Principles, which are admitted on both Sides.— And yet, indirectly and remotely, this new Scheme may be, and it is to be feared, is, Matter of great Joy and Triumph to the *Deists*. They cannot but hope, that the Minds of some unwary Christians may be unsettled by it. We must suppose, that they will be pleased to find the early and eminent Defenders and Ornaments of Christianity censured and abused by a learned Christian, and their old Objections and Scoffs at the Credulity and Impostures of the best Ages, and the Insufficiency of their Testimony, thus countenanced and imitated:
And

And they may possibly hope to make some little Advantage from this Gentleman's laying so great a Stress upon a supposed internal Credibility of Facts; and from his requiring stronger Evidence for miraculous than for natural Facts, and yet omitting to tell his Readers plainly, what this stronger Evidence is.

However, notwithstanding these, and some other unguarded suspicious Passages, which will be pointed out in the Course of these Papers; I am very willing to think, that the *Enquirer* did not intend any Disservice to Christianity in general, nor the least Encouragement to the Adversaries of it. And therefore these have nothing to do in the present Debate; nor will they ever be able to answer what the Doctor has taken occasion to urge against them.

From what I have said it appears, that I am resolved, in the Course of these Papers, not to take Advantage of every inaccurate Expression; not to charge the *Enquirer* with every Consequence, which may be drawn from some of his Arguments; but to treat him as tenderly and favourably as possible, and to consider his Declarations in favour of Christianity, more than some Insinuations to the contrary, as the sincere Sentiments of his Heart. There is something so extremely black and heinous in a Clergyman's purposely endeavouring to undermine

and

and subvert the Foundations of the Religion he professes to believe and teach, that I cannot bring myself, while there is the least room to hope better things of him, to charge him with such abominable Perfidy. But sure it becomes every one to wipe off all Suspicions of this, and to explain himself on such Points with the utmost Clearness: And no Man can write more clearly than the Doctor, if he pleases. He must therefore excuse me, if I now-and-then take an Opportunity to expostulate with him as a Minister of the Gospel, for throwing out, even sometimes when his Argument did not require it, in an Age when Christianity has so many Enemies, many crude offensive things, which these will undoubtedly catch at greedily, and draw Consequences from in favour of Deism. And here I cannot but intreat him, for the sake of his own Character, as well as the Pleasure it will give true Christians, and the Service it may do Unbelievers and Doubters, who may have some Regard to his Authority; that he will seriously and coolly revise, and either recall or explain, the unguarded Passages in his Book, and make a strong and explicit Profession of his Faith in the Gospel. If he is sincerely a Christian, he must have the Cause of Christianity at heart in the highest Degree; and cannot therefore refuse to do what must be of very seasonable Use and Consequence to this Cause, and to obviate infidel Consequences from any thing, which

may have too hastily dropped from his Pen. And indeed, should he decline or evade this, not only his religious, but his moral Character must be affected thereby; and the Interests of the Gospel itself might suffer, tho' without the least Reason or Justice, by such an Omission; which both the Friends and Enemies of Christianity will interpret in a manner which I am loth to mention.

I also very much wish, that this learned Gentleman would please to say explicitly, what those *Trammels of the Church* are, which he hath thought proper to deride, and to assert he was *never train'd to pace in*. Some have understood them to be the Thirty-nine Articles; and imagined, that a Dislike of some principal Doctrines contained in these hath produced that severe Treatment which he hath given not only to the modern Defenders of those Doctrines, Dr. *Waterland*, Dr. *Beriman*, &c. but to the Fathers of the primitive Church also. Yet surely he cannot mean this. For he hath repeatedly, and lately, I apprehend since the Publication of the *Introductory Discourse*, subscribed to the *Articles*, and to all things therein contained.--- But I cannot determine what he doth mean by this strange Expression, or in what *Trammels of the Church* many of his *Profession* have learned to pace, and he not; so that he should be less scrupulous in regard to Consequences, than they; especially to Consequences, such as he just before speaks

of, "dangerous to Christianity — and pro- Pref. p. 6.
 "ductive of universal Scepticism." And
 I still hope, that he will sincerely interpret
 and correct all these alarming Sayings, as be-
 comes a Minister of Christ, and of the Church
 of *England*, and seriously profess his Faith
 in the Doctrines, which this Church holds.
 Far from wishing Ill to him, I solemnly assure
 him, that such a Declaration would give the
 highest Pleasure to me, and, I am persuaded,
 to many others, whom he hath grieved and
 scandalized.

We saw before what Slights, and injurious
 Insults, some modern Christians have met with
 at this Gentleman's Hands. But we must not
 wonder at this, when the *Fathers* are treated
 so much more coarsely. He opens his Charge
 against them in very severe Language: "They Pref. p. 31;
 "were extremely credulous and superstitious;
 "possessed with strong Prejudices, and an
 "enthusiastic Zeal, in favour not only of
 "Christianity in general, but of every par-
 "ticular Doctrine, which a wild Imagina-
 "tion could ingraft upon it; and scrupling
 "no Art or Means, by which they might
 "propagate the same Principles: In short,
 "that they were of a Character, from which
 "nothing could be expected, that was can-
 "did and impartial; nothing, but what a
 "weak or crafty Understanding could sup-
 "ply, towards confirming those Prejudices,
 "with which they happened to be possessed;

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“ especially where Religion was the Subject.” This is a dreadful Character indeed, and requires the fullest Evidence to support it. As to the Fathers of the Three First Centuries, it is utterly unsupported; nor will all alleged against them in the *Enquiry* make it good. Sometimes we *there* find them allowed to have been Men of Piety and Learning, to have been imposed upon and deceived: But *here* no one favourable Allowance is made. The worst Constructions possible are put upon them. In a Word, if this heavy Accusation be credited, we can hardly imagine a Set of more desperately abandoned Wretches, more unworthy of all Esteem and Confidence. But sober and candid Persons will not be inclined hastily to believe it, and may perhaps rather think, that, like an overloaded Piece, it will recoil, and hurt only the Person, who presents and directs it.

The *Fathers* have had their Enemies before: But I do not remember to have seen such an Account of them given before. How very differently does the learned Mr. *Daille* talk on such an Occasion! He was far from being prejudiced in their Favour. He was at the Pains to collect a long List of their Errors, and exhibited these to the public View. But he makes no Scruple to allow them their just Praise and Use in several respects. In some Cases he confesses “ their Saying may very well pass for a Testimony”

“ many of the Judgment and Sense of the
 “ Church” — He says, “ No Man can deny B. 2. p. 23.
 “ the Excellency of their Doctrine, nor yet
 “ the Resplendency of their holy Life, to
 “ have shone forth very eminently in the
 “ primitive Fathers — They were Persons P. 58.
 “ who were endued with very large Gifts
 “ of the Spirit ; and with a most lively and
 “ clear Understanding for the diving into
 “ the Truth” — He talks of their Errors as P. 59.
 “ innocent Faults, Mistakes, Oversights, For-
 “ getfulnesses, and Sportings ;” and of them,
 as, “ indeed, very able and excellent Men.”

— He enters upon the Enquiry into their
 Errors “ very unwillingly, as taking very P. 61.
 “ little Pleasure in discovering the Infirmi-
 “ ties and Failings of any Men, especially
 “ of such, as are otherwise thought worthy
 “ of so great Estimation and Honour.” —

And altho’ he pleads for “ the Scriptures only P. 132.

“ being the true Foundation of the Faith of
 “ Protestants,” yet he contends also, “ that P. 190.

“ the *Authority* of the *Fathers* is of very

“ great Use in the Church, and serveth as

“ an *Outwork* to the Scriptures, for the re-

“ pelling the Presumption of those who

“ would forge a *new Faith*.” — Lastly, he

“ conceives the *Protestants* ought to employ P. 194.

“ a good Part of their Time in reading over

“ the Books of the *Antients*.”

These are the Accounts of one who had

well searched the Fathers, and shewed no

Inclination

Inclination to favour them more than needs must. But the Truth, in spite of some Prejudices, forced the above Concessions from him. I could have wished, that the *Enquirer* had thought fit to copy after this Pattern of Candour and fair Dealing. Then his Treatise, whatever the World might have thought of it, could not have given such just Offence, as it must at present on this Account give to all, who have the least Regard for Christian Antiquity.

It is to be feared, that this Regard has been for some Years upon the Decline, and that the Study of the Fathers has been too much neglected, even by Persons of our own Profession, who are most concerned to examine them. Prejudices have been taken up by young Men, that they are not worth the Reading. One would think it a sufficient Answer to these, that the greatest and best Divines of all Ages, and all Communions, have employed a great deal of Time in these Studies; and several of them have farther recommended these earnestly, next to the Consideration of the Scriptures, to those, who would make a Figure in their Profession, or be eminently useful to the Christian World. Dr. *Middleton* himself has owned them to be of Use and Service; nor is it probable he would have been the Man he is, had he been early discouraged from reading these Writings, which are now so much traduced.

Introd. p.
56, 57.

I know no one, who pretends, that the Fathers were infallible, or free from Errors. But these Errors are mostly of such a Nature, as we are now not liable to fall into.—Our present Enquiry however is not into their Opinions. We are to consider their Authority as Witnesses of Facts: And this will not at all be affected by the erroneous Notions, which they might hold in other respects. This State of the Question should be carefully remembred, and kept in View. From hence alone we shall find it easy to answer several of the Objections against them.

It may also be remarked, that there is a great Difference in the Facts they relate; and that we may allow, that the Fathers were too credulous and deceived in receiving some Accounts, and yet plead, that they could not easily be mistaken, and are therefore more to be depended upon, in others. In order therefore to form a right Judgment, we must make proper Distinctions; not between such as are “natural or super-
 Pref. p. 5
 “natural, probable or improbable;” for very natural Events may be most improbable, and unworthy of Credit; and, on the other hand, supernatural ones may be very probable, and very true; it may be easy for the Relaters to come at the Knowledge of them; they may be as plain and open as any other Facts; they must be proved in the same Way that all others are, by sufficient Attestations of credible Witnesses. But there are other Dif-

ferences of Moment to be attended to; between Miracles, which the Relaters assert upon their own Knowledge, and as what they saw themselves, or knew to be frequently and ordinarily done near them, and in their own Days; and such Facts, as are represented to have happened long before their Time, at a great Distance from them, which they had no Opportunity of examining, which they received only from Hearsay and oral Tradition, or which they have transmitted an Account of, as happening occasionally, or once only. Mistakes in these latter Cases will not invalidate their Authority, or set aside their Evidence, as to the former. The one, the best Historians are liable to, and sometimes guilty of: The others they must have been better Judges of; common Sense and Prudence would here sufficiently guard them against Delusions; and if we allow them to have had common Honesty too, the Accounts which they have left us may and ought to be relied on.

To every Search after Truth, which we would have successful, we must bring with us Minds as open to Conviction, and as much divested of Prejudices, as possible. But there is one Prejudice against the Miracles of the antient Church, which it may be proper to add a Word, in order to dispel: This is, that for many Ages Experience has shewn us nothing like them, nor have we had any Accounts of such, but what have proved nototiously

toriously false. No Christian, and indeed no wise Man, can pretend, that there is any Sense or Reason in this Prepossession, nor can the Shadow of a Conclusion be drawn from hence. And yet I believe, if we diligently attend to the Working of our own Thoughts, we shall find, that this one Circumstance has more Influence over us, than we imagine, and is more or less at the Bottom of all our Suspicions. The Relations of the Fathers concerning the extraordinary Powers then vouchsafed to the Church sound strange in our Ears, and are hardly thought credible; because nothing like them occurs; because we could not be prevailed on to believe any such now: They are attributed to Imposture, because Impostures of a similar Nature have been attempted, and been discovered.—All such Biasses we must guard against and remove, as being dangerous, and calculated only to mislead us. We must carry our Thoughts back Fourteen Centuries, consider the Circumstances of those Times, and what might be expected then. We must consider the Christian Religion, as it was in its Infancy, struggling with potent Enemies, contending with the strongest Prejudices, and with prevailing Vices of all Sorts; and we surely cannot wonder, if it pleased God then to confirm it, to confound and baffle its Opposers, and to comfort the Minds of its persecuted Professors, by some extraordinary Communications of His own Divine Power,
and

and by continuing to it for some Ages the same miraculous Assistances, by which He enabled the first Preachers of it to support themselves under the like Difficulties, and to prevail in the World. Whether the Condition of the Three First Centuries *required* Miracles, is another Question. Certainly it required them more than any of the succeeding ones. Without looking into any particular Accounts, we must own, that the Supposition of these is very suitable to it: We must think it probable, that we should meet with some Accounts of this kind; and therefore, when we actually do meet with them, we should not be backward to believe them; we should have very good Evidence to the contrary, before we disbelieve them.



CHAP. I.

Containing some Reflections upon the Introductory Discourse.

HAVING now laid together these general Reflections, which may serve for an Introduction, it is time to proceed to a particular Examination of the Evidence which this Gentleman has offered. I shall begin with making a few Remarks upon his *Introductory Discourse*, which first was published.

And

And this will not detain us long. But little of it relates to the Miracles of the *Three First Centuries*; and some of the Reasonings in it, which are levelled against these, the Reader will find obviated, in the Tracts published in Answer to it, particularly the *Observations*, &c. The Strength of the Objections is contained in the *Enquiry*. And this I propose to examine Page by Page, omitting nothing but what concerns other Gentlemen, who have been engaged in this Dispute, or what affects the Credit of Facts said to have happened without the Period I have fixed upon.

I find nothing in the *Introductory Discourse*, which is directly levelled against the Three First Centuries, till we come to Page 36. When the learned Author reasons backwards from the Accounts of the Fourth Age to those of the earlier, up to the times of the Apostles. The Reader will elsewhere find enough said upon this Topic: And most of the Reasonings here made use of have had their Confutation. It may be proper however to add a Word or two upon his *Fourth Observation*.

The First Ages have been usually thought the *purest*: And *Daillé* himself pleads, "that P. 3.
" those Times, which were nearest to the
" Apostles, were necessarily the purest, and
" less subject to Suspicion of Corruptions,
" either in Doctrine, or in Manners, and
" Christian Discipline; it being but reason-
" able

Ibid.

“able to believe, that if there be any Cor-
 “ruptions crept into the Church, they came
 “in by little and little, and by degrees, as it
 “happens in all other things.” And again,
 “That supposing that Christianity, even in
 “the First Ages, hath not been altogether
 “exempt from Alteration in Doctrine; yet
 “are they much more free from it, than
 “the succeeding Ages can pretend to be;
 “and are therefore consequently to be pre-
 “ferred before them in all respects; it be-
 “ing here something like what the Poets
 “have fancied of the Four Ages of the
 “World, where the succeeding Age always
 “came short of the former.”

The *Enquirer* however seems not to be
 willing to allow the earlier Ages this Honour
 any longer; and says, “Whatever Advantage
 “of Purity those First Ages may claim in
 “some particular respects, it is certain,
 “that they were defective in some others,
 “above all which have since succeeded
 “them.” As Instances of this, he mentions
 the Numbers of *rank Heresies*, and *spurious*
Books, which appeared then; and the dread-
 ful Character, which St. *Cyprian* has given
 of the Church, just before the *Decian Per-*
secution. The Inference we should draw
 from hence is, that even in the best Times
 there were some bad Men; but it cannot
 follow, that those Times were worse than all
 those, which have succeeded.

It

It is not fair to think the worse of the primitive Church, on Account of the many Heresies which troubled it. Some of these were started even in the Days of the Apostles. And the Fathers always strenuously opposed them. Even *those* Fathers, whose Testimonies we appeal to, and rely upon, in the Subject now under Consideration, had the Judgment, the Courage, and the Honesty, to confute and expose them, and were the chief Instruments of stopping their Progress. —It is but too certain, that in every Age of Christianity, many have arisen, not contented with the Doctrines of the Gospel, but speaking and writing strange unsound things. There is no Tenet so senseless and absurd, that has not been advanced and swallowed by some or others. God knows, that we are at present pestered and beset on every Side with numberless new Schemes and Pretensions, or with old exploded ones newly revived, and perhaps disguised, all warmly and wildly maintained by their several Friends and Abettors. These are indeed a Disgrace to Religion. But we must not judge of the Purity of any Church from either the Number or the Weakness of them. It is of little Moment to enquire, what Age has had *most* of such Errors to contend with, and when they have gained the most Profelytes. It may not be easy to determine this Point. And, if we could, probably, after all, the
De-

A Vindication of the

Decision would not turn out for the Credit or Advantage of our own Times.—The true Methods of forming a Judgment of the Purity of any Times, is to consider the Doctrines which were taught, the Discipline which was observed, and the Manners which were practised, by the faithful Christians, who kept to the Church, in them. And if we make our Comparison with a View to these, there can be no doubt, but that we must give it in favour of the earliest Ages. These will be found, on all these Accounts, to be incomparably the best. If the Reader desires Satisfaction in this Particular, he may look over Dr. Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, Dr. Clarke's *Essays on Baptism*, &c.

Equally unreasonable is it to condemn the antient Church, or to suspect its Purity, because of the many *spurious Books* forged and published under the Names of Christ, the Apostles, and apostolic Writers. The Fathers certainly ought not to suffer on this Account, as these were not supposed to have forged and published them; nay, as it is chiefly from these, that we are able to detect the Imposture---Nor was the Church in general at all concerned in them. Many of them were wrote in latter Ages: Most of them by Heretics. Some she knew nothing of; some she rejected; and not one of them was admitted into her Canon, or considered as genuine by her---The Doctor says indeed,

“ Several

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“ Several of which forged Books are frequently
 “ cited and applied to the Defence of Christi-
 “ anity, by the most eminent Fathers of the
 “ same Ages, as true and genuine Pieces, and of
 “ equal Authority with the Scriptures them-
 “ selves.” This is, I verily believe, incapable
 of being proved. The forged Books are not
 certainly cited at all by the earliest Writers.
 * When mentioned, they are generally men-
 tioned as forged, and of no Authority. But I
 do not remember any Instance of their being
 thus put on a Level with the Scriptures. It
 is somewhat strange, that this Gentleman has
 not cited, nor so much as referred to, any
 one Father, in Support of so extraordinary
 an Assertion. He sends his Reader indeed
 to *Archbishop Wake's Preliminary Discourse*;
 but there is nothing in this, which can justify
 the Position. He gives us the following
 Words as the Archbishop's own, printing
 them in *Italicks*, as what that great Writer
 “ tells us, *That it would be endless to insist*
 “ *on all the spurious Pieces, which were at-*
 “ *tributed only to St. Paul; but that the su-*
 “ *perstitious Books ascribed to St. Peter,*
 “ *viz. his Acts, his Gospel, his Preaching,*
 “ *his Revelations, were of much greater*
 “ *Authority even to the Times of Eusebius.*”
 I have now the Treatise before me, and must
 confess, I stand amazed at the Liberty this

* See Dr. Twells's Supplement to Vindication of St.
 Matthew. Dr. Cave's Hist. Lit. Ed. ult. V. 1. p. 6.

Gentleman

Gentleman has taken. Would not any one imagine, from this Account, that the Archbishop owned, that these latter Writings had for some time been respected in the Church; that the Forgeries had imposed upon many in it, nor were generally discovered till the Times of *Eusebius*? Less than this the Reader cannot conclude from such a Representation; which yet will not make good what had been asserted, that they were cited as of *equal Authority* with the Scriptures themselves. But yet I must assure him, that if he does conclude and imagine as above, he will be in an Error. We have here a most inexcuseable Perversion of the Archbishop's Meaning. The very Turn and Order of his Words is altered, to convey a Sense even contrary to what he intended. Having observed, that
 “neither *Eusebius*, nor St. *Jerom*, knew any
 “thing more of St. *Paul*'s Writing, than
 “what we have in those Epistles that are
 “still extant in our *Bibles* under his Name;
 “except it were the Epistle to the *Hebrews*,
 “and which—is yet ascribed to him by
 “*Eusebius*”——he goes on in the next
 Section, “But much greater is the Au-
 “thority of those supposititious Pieces,” not
superstitious, which is a Blunder either of this
 Gentleman or his Printer, “which the same
 “*Eusebius* tells us were, even in those Days,
 “attributed to that other great Apostle St.
 “*Peter*.” It is plain, that by the *greater*
Authority,

Authority, the Archbishop understood no more than the *more certain Antiquity* of these latter Forgeries, which were known in *Eusebius's* time, whereas the others were not. If any one can doubt this, let him read what immediately follows. “ Nevertheless, seeing “ he [*Eusebius*] at the same time declares, “ that they [the supposititious Pieces last- “ mentioned] were never looked upon as “ Catholic, but rather as set out by some “ Heretics of those times (as many other “ Pieces of the like Kind were) under “ the venerable Name of that Apostle, the “ better to gain thereby Credit to their “ Doctrine” — And is this saying, that Vid. C. 9. these Books were of much greater Authority §. 18. even to the Times of *Eusebius*? Is it here so much as suggested, that they were held in more Veneration and Esteem in the primitive Church, than they are now? I forbear the Reflections, which might be made on this Occasion, and leave it to the Reader to make such as he may think proper, for himself *.

To

* It may here be very proper to observe what *Dr. Grabe* says of one of the Pieces mentioned as ascribed to *St. Peter*, viz. his *Preaching* (*Spicil. Tom. i. p. 61, 62.*): That it was a Work of some Catholic Christians, known as early as the Year 123. cited by the orthodox Fathers, tho’ denied by them to be a canonical Writing of *St. Peter*, or any other inspired Person, and suspected to have been in some measure interpolated; that some Disciples of this Apostle, not long after his Death, had wrote it, to transmit down to
D
Posterity

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To make any Church answerable for the Forgeries of Heretics, or to judge of its Purity by these, is unjust. — Let us now follow our Author. “And no Man surely can doubt, but that those, who would either forge, or make use of forged Books, would, in the same Cause, and for the same Ends, make use of forged Miracles.” Now should we allow this, what is it to the Fathers, who have not been convicted of either? who no more forged the Miracles, than they did the Books? who, as they were able to distinguish the forged Books from such as were undoubtedly genuine, must in all Reason be allowed to have been able to distinguish false Miracles from real ones, and would not have appealed to false ones?

Posterity in Writing an Account of what they had heard him preach, that it might be ever remembred. If this were the Case, this Work must be struck out of the List of Forgeries; since it does not appear, that the Authors of it ever intended that it should pass as St. Peter's composing. And perhaps also the Case was the same with regard to some others of these old Books. They might have been Accounts given by early Christians from the best Information they could get, and which in many respects might have been worthy of Credit, and accordingly cited by the Fathers, without any Disgrace to these. — *Vid. Cave, Hist. Lit. V. 1. p. 20.* where he says, the Catholics opposed these traditionary Accounts to the false ones spread abroad by the Heretics of the Second Century. In other Works of this Kind, we may also suppose the Apostles introduced and personated; without any Intention to make the World believe, that they really said what was there ascribed to them; in the same innocent Kind of instructive Fiction, as has been used by many great Authors both ancient and modern.

Not

Not that these things should thus be represented as parallel: For, supposing a Person, who could allow himself to forge Books, equally willing and inclined to forge Miracles also, yet he would not find it equally easy to do this, as the other. The Difficulty of succeeding in this last Attempt is much greater, than that of succeeding in the former. To detect one Imposition, common Capacity, and common Care, would be sufficient: Whereas to discover the Falshood of the other Pretences, a critical Exactness of Judgment is generally necessary. Many then may be deceived here, who would be sufficiently guarded against the other kind of Cheats. Accordingly, there is no surer Way for an Impostor to be discovered, than by the Claim of Miracles. These, being Appeals to the Senses of Mankind, are subject to every one's Examination. A Failure here has been known to baffle and blow up at once the most confident Assertions, and the most artful Counterfeits of Divine Revelation. So that, if the Fathers had knowingly made use of forged Books for genuine ones, which Charge cannot be proved upon them; still Reasons of Prudence might hinder them from alleging Miracles, which they knew to be forged. And, even tho' they had been deceived in that Case, it would by no means follow, that they were so also in this.

A Vindication of the

As to St. Cyprian's Account of the State of Christians in his Times, I own, that he reports them to have been very bad. But tho' this is more to the Doctor's Purpose, than what he had urged before; yet it does not come up to it, or amount to a full Proof, that the earliest Ages were not the purest. A great Part of this Accusation, if understood strictly according to the Letter, would imply, that the Church was totally corrupt, and that there was no Religion or Virtue left. But this cannot be thought the Meaning of the *Martyr*. It is directly contradictory to the Accounts he gives in the Beginning of this very Treatise. Mentioning the Martyrs and Confessors, he styles them *militum Christi cohors candida*, "the sincere Company of Christ's Soldiers:" He says to them, that the Church opens her Gates with Joy, *ut adunatis agminibus intretis*, "that ye may enter in united Bodies:" He talks of *Men and Women, Virgins and Boys, nec non et cetera stantium multitudo*, &c. "as also all the Multitude of them that stood." All which Expressions must imply *Numbers* of Persons of all Ages and Ranks, who suffered for Conscience-sake in that fiery Persecution, and had been found firm to their God, and their Duty. Which could not have been the Case, had there been such an intire Degeneracy immediately before.

How

How then, you will say, are we to interpret the Words? Why, as we must equitably interpret most other general Censures of this Kind. It is a very common thing for zealous good Men, when they are lamenting the Iniquities of their Times, to exaggerate, and to indulge themselves in rhetorical Expressions beyond the strict Truth. If there were any Instances of the several Crimes here specified, as any such were too many, and too inexcusable, we may easily imagine, that so good a Man as St. *Cyprian* was highly offended and grieved at it, and was provoked to assign such Vices, as the Causes which had brought those severe Trials of Persecution on the Church. All therefore we can collect from hence is, that some Christians had far declined from the Rules of their holy Religion; but we cannot say what Numbers of these there were; nor determine what Proportion they bore to the Numbers of the Virtuous and Good; nor consequently conclude, that those Times were worse than any succeeding ones: Much less doth this Description of the State of Things in the Middle of the Third Century condemn or affect the preceding Ages of Christianity.

It is observeable, what handsome Terms Dr. *Middleton* here uses, speaking of St. *Cyprian*. He calls him *the chief Ornament of those Ages — the ablest Master of the Times*; and says, that *the Character of the Drawer*

must oblige us to believe, that it [the Picture] bore a great Likeness to the Original. In how very different a manner this Father is treated in the *Enquiry*, we shall see hereafter. This puts me in mind of what has often been remarked, the same sort of Inconsistency in other Writers; who, tho' prejudiced against the Fathers, and labouring to run them down all they can, when they appear to stand in the Way of some favourite Hypothesis; yet, if they, on any particular Occasion, appear to be on their Side, and serviceable to their Argument, are then as forward as any to rely upon them, and sometimes insist more upon their Credit and Authority than they deserve. Thus we are here said to be *obliged by St. Cyprian's Character* to admit this eloquent Representation of the Vices of his Time beyond the Occasion, and without regarding the Probability, of it: And yet in other Places he is represented as a designing enthusiastic Man, whose Word is not to be trusted for a plain Fact; nay, not for such Occurrences as happened to himself.

P. 40.

In the next Page of the *Introductory Discourse* we have a strange Instance of unwary Expression: Which tho', I hope, the Author did not intend; yet I cannot but think it proper to call upon him to retract it. In the Latitude it appears in, the Cause is plainly yielded up to the *Deists*. The Sentence is this: "The forged Miracles of the Fourth
Century

“ Century give us just Reason to suspect the
 “ Pretensions of EVERY other Age both be-
 “ fore and after it.” What! *every* other Age?
 Surely, those of the Old and New Testament
 should have been *expressly* excepted. What
 more could any Infidel have said? The
 Doctor will complain, if we charge him
 with ill Designs: But he cannot justly com-
 plain of us for pointing out such glaring In-
 accuracies, of which so bad an Use may be
 made, and for desiring him to correct them.

This Author takes up again the Considera- P. 41, &c.
 tion of the primitive Forgeries; and argues,
 that “ as the high Authority of the Apostolic
 “ Writings — was the Motive, without
 “ Doubt, which excited some of the ablest
 “ and most learned of the Christians to —
 “ forge---Books under those false Titles; so
 “ the great Fame and Success of the Apostolic
 “ Miracles would naturally excite some also
 “ of the most crafty, when the Apostles
 “ themselves were dead, to attempt some
 “ juggling Tricks in Imitation of them,
 “ and—to impose upon that *Simplicity* and
 “ *Credulity*, which distinguished the Chara-
 “ cter of those early Ages.” It has already
 been remarked, that the Authors of the pri-
 mitive Forgeries were, for the most part,
 not orthodox Christians, but Heretics; and
 that they could not so early, had they never
 so great a Mind to attempt it, have succeeded
 in a Design to palm false Miracles on the
 D 4 World,

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World, or, in other Words, to persuade them out of their Senses. We are frequently told of these *crafty Jugglers*, as being then in the Church: But who or what they were, History, I suppose, is silent; or else we should have been favoured with some better Information about them. As to the general Charge of *Credulity*, it does not appear to be true. The Objections of *Celsus* and *Julian* were evidently built on some Texts of Scripture misinterpreted; such as, *Thy Faith will save thee*; and *Origen**, in Answer, urges the Propriety of Mens acting on this Principle of Faith in religious, as they do in worldly Matters; and that a more distinct Enquiry into the different Notions of Philosophy was incompatible with the Condition and Circumstances of the greatest Part of the World †. And if, besides, he, and other Defenders of our Religion, charged the Heathens with believing as implicitly; this Answer had its

* P. 9, 10. Vid. p. 281. where *Origen* says, that St. Paul reproved those who had *believed in vain*, or without Reason.

† Perhaps *Celsus* might mean to object against the Christians, not so much for believing the Authority of the Gospel, without sufficient Evidence, as for believing its Doctrines, and the obscure Places of the Prophets and other Scriptures, without thoroughly understanding, or nicely examining them. *Origen*, whose Answer is in part suppressed, seems to have understood him in this Sense, at least, in part. And accordingly the Term $\psi\lambda\eta\ \pi\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ is opposed, l. 3. p. 130. to the Understanding of the hidden allegorical Sense of Scripture. $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \omicron\ \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma\ \epsilon\upsilon\tau\iota\sigma\kappa\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma\ \pi\alpha\tau\epsilon\alpha\ \tau\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \phi\epsilon\lambda\sigma\omicron\gamma\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \sigma\iota\upsilon\gamma\ \alpha\lambda\epsilon\gamma\omicron\upsilon\gamma\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \mu\epsilon\tau\ \alpha\pi\omicron\ \tau\eta\varsigma\ \psi\iota\lambda\eta\varsigma\ \pi\iota\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma,\ \epsilon\pi\epsilon\upsilon\eta\eta\sigma\alpha\iota\ \delta\epsilon\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\ \epsilon\upsilon\tau\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma\ \delta\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota\varsigma\ \gamma\gamma\alpha\phi\alpha\iota\varsigma\ \nu\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon.$

Weight

Weight and Force, and shewed the Unreasonableness of the Objection; but cannot be understood as a Concession, that the Christians of that Time were grossly credulous, or that all Examination was unnecessary, and laid aside. The Gentleman therefore has produced no Authority for this bold Accusation.

He proceeds, "When these artful Pretenders, by insinuating themselves chiefly into private Houses, or among the ignorant Populace, had been able to maintain their Ground thro' the Three First Centuries, the leading Clergy of the Fourth — understood their Interest too well to part with the old Plea of miraculous Gifts." P. 42.

—Whatever is asserted a little before, it is not *here* said, whether the Clergy of the Three First Ages were at all concerned in this Matter, either as Deceivers or Deceived. But concerned they were, and very nearly too, if this was a Juggle. Besides, *Origen* treats the Charge of *Celsus*, that the Christians were *γυναι*, and declined to apply to Men of liberal Educations, as a pure Calumny. Cont. Cels. 284, 141.

And farther, the Fathers we appeal to, have shewed, by their Writings, that they were neither ignorant, nor afraid of an Enquiry; that they were not thus easily imposed upon by Cheats and Pretenders: And this Author has in Effect owned, that they were not "at Liberty to apply all Arts, without Reserve, to the Conversion of the Heathens." And yet P. 43.



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yet they relate the Miracles of their Days, as happening frequently and openly, and not in such a clandestine manner, as is here without any Grounds insinuated, but has never yet been proved, nor indeed can be proved.

What this Gentleman adds in the next Paragraph is in the main just. I see no Reason to put the Miracles even of the Three First Ages on a Level with those of the Gospels, or to suppose, that they are in all respects parallel. I would not call these latter ones in, as necessary to strengthen the Ground and Foundation of Christianity. This stands sure, and ever will do so, upon those of our *Saviour*, and His *Apostles*. And yet I cannot see, on the other hand, why we should refuse or discard the farther Confirmation and Witness, which the subsequent Miracles, if well attested, bear and yield to our holy Faith and Religion, tho' we have no Reason to think them principally worked for *our* Information and Conviction. Many of them differ very little from those of Scripture, and deserve most of the Characters, which this Author here attributes to these. Many of them are in kind the same. If they were wrought for the farther Propagation of Christianity in the World, the Conviction of obstinate and prejudiced Men, and the Confirmation and Comfort of true Believers; these Ends are perfectly similar to those of the Gospel Miracles; and we may apply to them,

them, what the Doctor says of these, that they are “ so great, so important, and so universally beneficial, as to be highly worthy “ of the Interposition of The Deity.”— For ought that yet appears, they also were “ wrought by the Ministry of mean and “ simple Men, in the open View of the “ People.”— And if this was not “ as the “ Testimonial of *any* Divine Mission,” yet it was, as a farther Evidence of the same Divine Truths, which Christ and His Apostles preached, and as a remaining Means of Conviction to the Heathens of those Days.--- These also were “ delivered to us *partly* by “ Eye-witnesses,” generally by such Witnesses, “ whose honest Characters exclude the “ Suspicion of Fraud, and whose Knowledge “ of the Facts, which they relate, *does not* “ admit the Probability of a Mistake.” This will appear hereafter to have been the Fact in several Cases. At least we must say, that the Evidence for them will be found very sufficient, tho’ it should not be allowed in all Points so very full, as what we have for those of Scripture.

I cannot help observing, tho’ it be with Regret, that not even this very Paragraph, which is the strongest for the Miracles of the New Testament of any in the Book, is without an unwary Expression or two, which, as a Christian, and a Clergyman, the Doctor would do well to explain. He begins the Reasoning with
saying,

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P. 214.
Note.

saying, "as far as Miracles can evince the
"Divinity of a Religion." But why this
Caution? He has elsewhere confessed them
to be "the strongest Confirmation of the
"Truth." And such, Miracles so circum-
stanced must always be. — Again, it is
certainly much, very much, too low to say
of the Apostles, that it is *scarce probable*,
that they were mistaken in the Knowledge
of the Miracles they relate. *Scarce probable!*
Unless their Eyes, and Ears, and almost all
their other Senses, could perpetually deceive
them, we cannot imagine a *Possibility* of
their being mistaken. They *must* have known,
for Instance, the Truth of our Lord's Resur-
rection, of which they had the very utmost
Proofs, which could be given. And they
must have known the Truth of the Miracles,
which they themselves performed. It would
not be enough to say, in this case, that
it is very improbable, that they should have
been deceived. But to urge only, that "their
"Knowledge *scarce* admits the Proba-
"bility of a Mistake," is weakening the
Argument with a Vengeance. — But this is
one of the Expressions, which I hope to see
corrected.

I might here dismiss the *Introductory Dis-
course*, as I see nothing else, not remarked
upon elsewhere, which relates directly to
my Design. However, I cannot forbear
adding some Observations, tho' it be going
some-

man

somewhat out of my Way, in Defence of the Sentiments of some great Men of our Church. This Gentleman says, that tho' all the Reformed Churches own the Sufficiency of Scripture, yet the Divines of our own " have been apt, on all Occasions, to join P. 46. " the Authority of the primitive Church to " that of sacred Writ; to supply Doctrines " from the antient Councils, in which the " Scriptures are either silent, or thought defective; to add the holy Fathers to the " College of the Apostles; and, by ascribing " the same Gifts and Powers to them both, " to advance the primitive Traditions to a " Parity with the Apostolic Precepts." Whom is this Gentleman speaking of? For my own Part, I do not remember any Protestant Writer of any Note so shamefully inconsistent. A due Deference surely may be paid to the early Fathers and Councils, without attributing divine Authority to them. They may be, especially when consenting together, heard as Witnesses of the Doctrines of the Church in their Times, as good Interpreters of Scripture in the main fundamental Points; and yet not be put on a Level with Scripture, or made the Guides of our Faith. More than that the Writers of our Church have not, that I know, asserted. And so much Mr. *Chillingworth* * himself has asserted. Nay, in

* As this Gentleman, I am debating with, lays a great Stress upon the Authority of Mr. *Chillingworth*, it will be proper

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in other Protestant Churches the Writers have quoted the early Fathers with Reverence, to support their Opinions, when they could. We may defy this Gentleman to produce any one Instance of our "supplying Doctrines from the antient Councils, in which the Scriptures are either silent, or thought defective." And until such Proof be brought, the Charge must be looked upon as a grievous Calumny.

At present, the only Writer quoted, is the late Dr. *Waterland*, a Gentleman, whom I had the Pleasure of knowing, and whose Memory the

proper to enquire into his Sentiments on this Point, which the following Extracts from his Writings will very fully discover. "What," says he to his Adversary, "if Protestants be now put in mind, that, for Exposition of Scripture, they are bound by a Canon *to follow the antient Fathers*, which whosoever doth with Sincerity, *N. B.* it is utterly impossible he should be a Papist? And it is most falsely said by you, that you know, that to some Protestants I clearly demonstrated, or ever so much as undertook, or went about to demonstrate, the contrary." *Preface.*

Again, "Tho' in such Points, which may be held diversly of diverse Men, *salvâ fidei compage*, I would not take any Man's Liberty from him; and humbly beseech all Men, that they would not take mine from me; yet thus much I can say (which, I hope, will satisfy any Man of Reason); that whatsoever hath been held necessary to Salvation, either by the Catholic Church in all Ages, or by the Consent of Fathers, measured by *Vincentius Lirinensis's* Rule, or is held necessary, either by the Catholic Church of this Age, or by the Consent of Protestants, or even by the Church of *England*; that, against the *Socinians*, and all others whatsoever, I do verily believe and embrace." *Ibid.* Let us hear this Gentleman make such a Declaration.

" That

the Christian World will ever have Cause to regard. The excellent Use he made of Ecclesiastical Antiquity is well known. But he was much too wise and judicious to run the Lengths, which our Divines are here in general accused of. In the Treatise referred to, wrote purposely to shew the Use and Value of that Antiquity, he frequently guards against such an Extreme. He says, *Antiquity ought to attend as an Handmaid to Scripture — in this ministerial View, is of great Use —* He considers it as a proper Means or Help for the ascertaining the true and full Meaning of sacred Writ — He ex-

Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, ch. 7. p. 360, 361.

“ That the Church’s Interpretation of Scripture is always true — in some Sense may be also admitted; viz. if you speak — of the Church of all Ages since the Apostles.”
Pt. I. ch. 2. §. 88.

“ We are ready to receive both Scripture, and the Sense of Scripture, upon the Authority of *original Tradition*.”
§. 89.

“ I will answer that, which is most certain and evident; — that the antient Apostolic Churches are not now, as they were in *Irenæus’s* Time: Then they were all at Unity about Matters of Faith; which Unity was a good Assurance, that what they so agreed in, came from some common Fountain, and that no other than of Apostolic Preaching. And this is the very Ground of *Tertullian’s* so often mistaken *Prescription* — *Variâsse debuerat error Ecclesiarum; quod autem apud multos unum est, non est erratum, sed traditum.*” §. 147. Thus this excellent Writer: Nor is there the least Inconsistency between his declaring all this, and maintaining elsewhere, that the Scriptures are the only Rule of our Faith. Dr. *Middleton* therefore cannot go on to abuse the early Fathers, to discard their Authority, and to plead, that their Principles, or a Confidence in them, directly lead to Popery, without flatly contradicting Mr. *Chillingworth*, whom he professes to admire so highly.

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P. 364.

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380.

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395.

Introd.
P. 48.

presly says, *There is no trusting — to oral Tradition, distinct from Scripture, nor to written, disagreeing with Scripture*—Not that one would, at this time of Day, presume to rest an Article of Faith upon Church Records alone, or upon any thing besides Scripture: But while the superior Proof from sacred Writ is the Ground of our Faith, the subordinate Proof from Antiquity may be a good Mark of Direction for the Interpretation of Scripture in the prime Doctrines—And yet more expresly, if possible; *We produce not Fathers to superadd new Doctrines to Scripture, but only to secure the old; not to complete the Rule, but more strongly to assert and maintain both its true Sense, and whole Sense.* I might add a great deal more to the same Purpose. And is this the Language of one, who puts Scripture and Antiquity on a Par, who thinks the former defective, and would supply Doctrines unknown to it from the latter? Can any Words more strongly disclaim such an Imputation? How could Dr. Middleton accuse this very learned and accurate Writer of putting Antiquity on a Level with Scripture, after so many Declarations to the contrary?

But had he no Grounds for such a Charge? None that I can discover. He indeed quotes a Sentence from the Doctor (among two or three others), the last Words of which are; *However, as to the general Case, we may say, that*

that those Two [Scripture and Antiquity] ought always to go together, and to coincide with each other; and when they do so, they stand the firmer in their united Strength: But if ever they clash, or appear to clash, then undoubtedly there is an Error somewhere, like as when Two Accountants vary in casting up the main Sum. These Words seem most to the Gentleman's Purpose. But why would he stop here, and include all that remains under an &c.? Why would he not take the Trouble to write a few Lines more, which would have clearly explained the Author's Meaning, and shewn, that tho' he thought the Witness of Antiquity important, he did not lay the same Stress upon it, as upon Scripture? It follows, In such a Case, a wise Man will not rest satisfied (if the thing be of Moment) till he finds out, if possible, the Reason of the Difference, and discovers where the Error lies. For, either it must lie on the Scripture Side (when a Man takes that for Scripture, which is not Scripture, or that for true Interpretation, which is not true Interpretation); or it must lie on the Tradition Side, thro' some Misreport made of the Antients, or some Mistake of the Antients themselves. It is obvious to observe, how very differently Dr. Waterland speaks here of Scripture, and of the Antients. These might mistake, as well as be misreported. That might be misinterpreted, but could not be

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charged with Errors. So far is this excellent Writer from allowing these two the same Authority.

This ill Treatment of Dr. *Waterland* I since find had been before objected to this Writer. And I cannot but set down the Defence, which either himself, or one, who writes so like him, that he cannot be distinguished from himself, has made for him.

“ The Observer takes Occasion---to censure
 “ the Author of the Discourse *for citing*
 “ *Passages from Dr. Waterland unfairly,*
 “ *which, if rightly quoted, would bear di-*
 “ *rectly against him.* Yet all, which that
 “ Author has so cited, is given in Dr. *Wa-*
 “ *terland's* own Words, without any Mix-
 “ ture or Paraphrase; and, what is more to
 “ the Purpose, the Passage here particularly
 “ referred to, is an entire Paragraph, in
 “ which Dr. *Waterland* professes to have
 “ collected *the Sum of what he had been en-*
 “ *deavouring to prove,* in the whole forego-
 “ ing Treatise: And it is not possible, that
 “ any Man's Sentiments can be more fairly
 “ represented, than in those very Words, to
 “ which he himself refers us, for the Sub-
 “ stance of them: And if that Doctor
 “ has happened to talk differently in dif-
 “ ferent Parts of his Writings, it certainly
 “ proves nothing else but his own Incon-
 “ sistency. For I may venture to affirm of
 “ the Author of the *Introductory Discourse,*
 “ what

“ what I shall say without Scruple of myself, that I have never read all Dr. *Waterland's* Works, nor any of them, perhaps, quite through; but have ever valued my Time too much, to spend it on such Reading.” One cannot, without some Indignation, read such strong Expressions of Contempt causlessly thrown out against one of the most learned and useful Writers of his own, or any other Age. But, as neither the Doctor's Memory, nor the Character of his Works, can be at all hurt by such idle Reflections, I shall confine my Considerations to the notable Way, in which these wrong Quotations are defended. “ They are the Doctor's own Words:” Yes: But are they *all* his Words? Should not the entire Paragraph have been quoted, as well as referred to? Was it fair to give the Reader *only Part* of the Sum of what Dr. *Waterland* had been proving, and to leave out what immediately follows, which must have explained the Doctor's Meaning, and cleared him at once of the Charge of Inconsistency, as well as Want of Judgment and Exactness?—As to the Choice of his Studies, the *Enquirer*, without Doubt, must take his own Judgment. Yet, without presuming to dictate to him, I cannot but recommend, as what appears to me most equitable, that before he allows himself to abuse any Author, he would not think it too much Trouble, however

Remarks
on Two
Pamphlets
p. 42.

A Vindication of the

mortifying it may be, to read over at least the whole Chapter, from which the Occasion of the Abuse may be taken. — However, it appears from what has been said, that, in the present Case, if he had but read on to the End of the Paragraph in part cited, and considered the Whole carefully, he might have been set right.

On looking back to Page 28. of the *Introductory Discourse*, I find another glaring Instance of Unfairness in citing Dr. *Waterland*. He accuses him of *a little Artifice*; but has been guilty of a great deal of this, or at least of most notorious Carelessness. He says, after the Doctor “has often affirmed, *that* “*the miraculous Powers of the Church subsisted thro’ the Three First Centuries* at least, “he adds the following Amendment to it: “*Nay, and ~~if~~ we may believe Paulinus, who reports it as an Eye-witness, they continued down to the ~~later~~ End of the Fourth.* But “why must ~~we~~ be referred to *Paulinus* only, “in a Question of such Importance? a Name “unknown to the greatest Part of his Readers; while the Names of *Athanasius, Basil,* “---are---appealed to by himself on every “other Occasion; who have written whole “Books on the Miracles of that very Age.”

—And the Sting at the Close is, “The “Omission therefore of these greater Names, “which could not possibly be accidental, is “a clear, tho’ a tacit Confession, that he “knew

“ knew them all to have forfeited their Credit, in this particular Cause; and that even his beloved *Athanasius*, on whose Faith he had pinned his own, and on the Defence of whose Orthodoxy he had spent his whole Life and Studies, was not to be trusted at last with the Report of a Miracle.”

Could any one now imagine, that Dr. *Waterland* has given *not the least* Occasion for all this Torrent of Satire? And yet, if the Reader will turn to the Places referred to, he will find it to be wholly groundless. The Doctor is talking about *delivering over unto Satan*, as “ a Form of Excommunication;” and says, that “ in the *Apostolical* Age, it was accompanied with *supernatural* or miraculous Effects upon the Bodies of the Persons so delivered: Tho’ it may be supposed, that such Effects might last beyond the Apostolic Age, because other *miraculous* Gifts certainly did so.” And in the *Addenda*, to the Words, *such Effects might last beyond the Apostolic Age*, it is subjoined, “ I might have expressed myself with greater Assurance, and said, that they actually did last as far down as to the *Cyprianic* Age. Nay, if we may believe *Paulinus*,” &c. The Reader cannot but see, that what *Paulinus* is here quoted for, was not the Continuance of *Miracles in general*, as is represented by the Doctor, but

Import.

P. 111.

P. 496, 7.



A Vindication of the

of one particular Kind of Miracle, which attended the Excommunications of those early Ages. And this the Gentleman knows and owns, giving the very Words of *Paulinus* in the next Page. And where then is the Reason for falling so foul on poor Dr. *Waterland*? He only mentions this one Father, on this Occasion. — Possibly this Father only might have mentioned *this* Miracle: Or the Doctor might not remember any other Writer of that Age, who related it so strongly. But how will this shew, that he disbelieved the Truth of *any other* Miracles of that Time, which he does not appear to have had then in his Thoughts, and which were foreign to his Argument?

The Reader will, I hope, excuse these Attempts, tho' they may be looked upon as Digressions from my Plan, to vindicate this great Man. Justice, and indeed Gratitude, to his Memory demanded it of me. And besides, it seems proper enough to give the *English* Reader a Specimen or two of our Gentleman's quoting Authorities not the least to his Purpose, and building angry and unkind Representations and Reflections upon them.

That the *Church of England*, and her best Sons, have ever from the Reformation maintained and professed a great Regard for primitive Antiquity, is true. But this has been far from giving any Advantage to the *Roman Catholics*,

Catholics, as this Gentleman would persuade us. It is, on the contrary, our Glory and Security to have our Discipline and Worship so much better modelled than those of any other Communion * of Protestants; and what some of the wisest of our Foreign Brethren have envied us for, and lamented their own want of, as a Defect and Imperfection †. And whereas the Doctor thinks, that the Compliance of some of our leading Churchmen, a little before the great Rebellion, with the Church of *Rome*, and in particular their using the Names of Priests and Altars, “ had P. 52.
“ no other Effect, nor ever can have, than
“ to weaken the Protestant Cause;” I would earnestly recommend to his Consideration the Sentiments of our excellent *Chillingworth* on this Point; by which he will see, that he, to whom he has given the Character of having, “ of all Men, best understood the P. 45.
“ real Grounds of the Controversy between
“ the Protestants and the Papists,” had no such terrible Apprehensions of the Danger of using these Names. *What if the Names of*

* Here I cannot help citing Mr. *Chillingworth* again. Speaking of the different Methods of the Reformers, he says, to his Popish Adversary, “ Especially in Comparison of your
“ Church and Religion, is not the Difference between good
“ and bad, but between good and better; and they did best,
“ that followed Scripture interpreted by catholic written Tradition: Which Rule the Reformers of the Church of *England*
“ proposed to themselves to follow.” *Cb. 5. §. 82.*

† See Lord *Clarendon's* Hist. V. 5. p. 217.

A Vindication of the

*Priests and Altars, so frequent in the antient Fathers, tho' not now in the Popish Sense, be now resumed, and more commonly used in England, than of late Times they were; that so the colourable Argument of their Conformity, which is but nominal, with the antient Church, and our Inconformity, which the Governors of this Church would not have so much as nominal, may be taken away from them; and the Church of England may be put in a State, in this regard more justifiable, against the Roman, than formerly it was; being hereby enabled to say to Papists (whenever these Names are objected), We also use the Names of Priests and Altars, and yet believe neither the corporal Presence, nor any proper and propitiatory Sacrifice *? —*

Pref. vide
P. 114.

From this one Passage, as well as those before cited, we may see, how well this Writer has built on the Principles of Mr. *Chillingworth*, and how likely his Notion is to do Service to the Protestant Cause.

* The Doctor, p. 49. represents *Cranmer* and *Ridley* as labouring and gruelled at some Passages of the Fathers alleged against them by their Adversaries. But this is not true. They very clearly explained these. *Vid. Fox, V. 3. p. 45, &c.* Tho' had it been so, yet the Difficulties they were under, being denied the Use of their own Books, should be considered.

C H A P. II.

REMARKS on the PREFACE.

IT is now Time to proceed to the Consideration of the *Enquiry*, in which the Miracles related by the Fathers are viewed more distinctly. The *Preface* chiefly relates to other Writers, who had opposed the *Introductory Discourse*. Some Parts of it have likewise already fallen under our Notice. And the few others, which affect the Credit of the Three First Ages, shall now have their Examination.

As to Mr. *Locke's* Authority in this Cause depending, it weighs with me no more than the *Enquirer's* own. Without lessening or derogating from his Abilities, we may desire to be excused from subscribing to all his Opinions. He was indeed, as he is here represented, “singularly qualified, by his Talents and Studies, to discern the exact Relations and Consequences of Things.” But this Character does not qualify him to be a Judge in the Matters before us. The present Dispute must be determined by a Recourse to *History*, more than to *Philosophy*. These are very different Provinces, require very different Talents, which do not suppose

Pref. p. 4.

pose each other. Nay, Mr. *Locke* himself was sensible of his Ignorance and Deficiency in this respect, and therefore desired his Friend *Limborch's* Sentiments. *De miraculis post apostolorum tempora certiores fieri cupio. Non ego satis versatus in historiâ ecclesiasticâ, ut quid de iis statuam nôrim.* This Letter is dated *Feb. 29. 1692.* and it is observable, that his *Third Letter on Toleration* was ended *June 20. 1692.* So that it was Eight Months after this was finished, that he confessed his Ignorance and Doubts, and therefore could be no Judge of this Matter before. Should it be thought, that the Date of this Letter was 1691-2. tho' I think it is not usual to write this 1692; still Mr. *Locke*, even on this Supposition, must have written that Part of his *Third Letter on Toleration*, which speaks of the primitive Miracles, either as early as his Letter to *Limborch*, or so soon after, that he could not have sufficient time to inform himself well of this Matter in the mean while. Indeed, if this was the Date, he probably wrote to *Limborch* just when he came to that Part of the Letter on Toleration, and found himself at a Loss. — However this be, 'tis plain, if we will take his own Word, that his Authority in this respect can weigh nothing. — Nay, farther, Mr. *Locke* has not declared himself of Dr. *Middleton's* Opinion. His Antagonist had asserted, that Miracles ceased, when the Empire became Christian;

Christian; and thence argued, that the Civil Authority was to supply their place. Mr. *Locke* only denies the Fact of their stopping just then; but does not determine, whether they ended with the Lives of the Apostles, or were continued after the Days of *Constantine*; a Question, which it was neither necessary to his Purpose, nor in his Power, to determine.

We must not therefore be prejudiced by this great Name; especially as we have numberless others, far more able to decide this Point, than Mr. *Locke*, on our Side. Let us rather attend to the State of the Question. This, we are told, "depends on the joint P. 9.
" Credibility of the Facts pretended to have
" been produced by those [miraculous] Powers, and of the Witnesses who attest them."
I own, that I am here dissatisfied at setting out. There appears to me to be some Ambiguity or Impropriety in this Way of speaking. It is plain, that this Gentleman supposes Facts to be credible or incredible, distinct from the Consideration of any Testimony. One or other of these Qualities are supposed inherent in their very Nature. Whereas, strictly and accurately speaking, they bear a relation to Evidence *. According to the Strength or Weakness of this, we either believe or disbelieve a Relation. I

* That which makes me believe, is something extraneous to the thing I believe. *Locke's Essay, Vol. II. p. 275.*

grant,

grant, that in common Discourse it is not unusual to call any thing credible or incredible, antecedent to our Consideration of its Proof. But if we examine our Ideas, this will be found to be a loose unphilosophical Way of expressing ourselves. All that can be meant is, that such a thing is possible or impossible, probable or improbable, or, at farthest, happening very frequently, or very seldom. Nothing can be absolutely in itself incredible, but what is impossible. Such no Evidence can prove. And therefore, if this appears, there will be no need to enquire into the Qualifications of the Witnesses. If the Facts be possible, they may become credible upon sufficient Testimony. — Not but we may suppose some such so grossly improbable, that they may be thought next to impossible; that we cannot but suspect the Truth of them, and decline examining them. We may admit, that there may be Circumstances in a Fact, which may not be strictly impossible, yet which are so utterly unlikely, that a Man can hardly hesitate, whether he shall reject them or not. But I do not apprehend this to be the Doctor's Meaning; or, if it is, it is not applicable to his Purpose; since many of the Miracles of the primitive Church, by far the greatest Part of those of the Three First Ages, are not *in this Sense* incredible *.

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* For the Doctor will not say, that all Miracles, as such, are incredible. And, if any other Person is of that Opinion, he

As then this Gentleman lays such a Stress on the Credibility inherent in the Nature of Miracles, and makes the Question depend partly upon it; I think he should have been very explicit in declaring what he would have understood by it, and in fixing on some Rule, Test, and Criterion, by which it might always be discerned. At present, by leaving this important Point open, and talking in so lax a manner, he seems not to have taken Care enough to leave us sufficient Means to distinguish true Miracles from false ones. Unbelievers may carry this Point much farther than he might intend. They are inclined to reject *all* Miracles, *as incredible*. And till a fuller Account be given of this Expression, every one will understand it, as he pleases.

Here therefore is a material Defect in this new Scheme. It might have been expected, that the *Enquiry* would have opened with giving us the several Marks and Proofs of true Miracles, and the Differences between these and Impostures. Then, by applying these Marks and Proofs to any Facts, which he had a mind to examine, it would have been easier to see, whether these would have stood their Ground, and, if they wanted those Circumstances, to have disproved them. This would have been the plainest and fairest Way of proceeding. Nor would it have been at

he may be convinced of his Mistake by consulting Bishop Butler's *Analogy*, Pt. II. c. 3. §. 3.

all

all difficult to have laid down those several Marks. But this would not have answered his Purpose. It is easier to harangue upon a supposed Incredibility of the Facts, such as will defeat their Testimony, be it what it will ; but such as the Reader is left to conjecture what it is.

But Dr. *Middleton* is not content to insist upon this. He proceeds to compare together the Credibility or Incredibility of the Facts, and that of the Witnesses ; and gives the Preference to the former Sort of Evidence. “ The Credibility of Facts lies open
P. 9, 10. “ to the Trial of our Reason and Senses ; but
“ the Credibility of Witnesses depends on a
“ Variety of Principles, wholly concealed
“ from us. And tho’ in many Cases, it may
“ reasonably be presumed, yet in none, can
“ it be certainly known.” We are here reasoning about Facts long since past. And the Question, I apprehend, is, Whether, and how far, such are worthy or unworthy of any Belief, from their internal Nature and Circumstances only, antecedently to the Consideration of any Testimony. In a large Sense, we may say, that all Points whatever, even the Credibility of Witnesses itself, *lies open to the Trial of our Reason and Senses* ; since these are the Inlets of our Knowledge, the Faculties, by which we must judge of Truth and Falshood, in general. It must also be granted, that present Facts, which
are

are Appeals to the Senses, are more striking and satisfactory than any long, intricate Reasonings. And hence Miracles may be pronounced to be the shortest, and clearest Means of Conviction of the Divine Authority of any Mission, and consequently of any Doctrine, to those who see them. And farther, as we may have sufficient Certainty of their having been worked in Times past, they must, if well attested, be full Proofs even to us, who do not see them. This Gentleman indeed says, the Credibility of Witnesses can in no case be certainly known. If he means *infallibly* known, so as to exclude every Possibility of Imposture; he may be right. But this is not the only Sort of Certainty. There is also a *moral* Certainty, which amounts to much more than a Presumption, and which may in many Cases satisfy us, that the Relators and Witnesses of antient Facts (whether natural or supernatural, it matters not) deserve Credit.

And in what manner can our Reason and Senses *try* any such Facts? Before the Witnesses are examined, what Judgment can be given concerning them? Sometimes indeed it will be easy to disprove the Falshood of them; as if they are impossible; if they are inconsistent with the Divine Attributes, or any other known Truth; or if they are contradictory to our Senses. Sometimes we cannot forbear suspecting them; as when
they

they are in themselves ridiculous, or too low and mean to be supposed the Effects of the Divine Power pretended to, or when the Occasions of them are as unworthy of such extraordinary Interposition.——But where none of these Circumstances appear, the Truth of such past Facts still remains to be proved. And this in no case whatever can be proved, but by sufficient Attestations. We certainly cannot see them. Most probably we have seen nothing like them. How then can they, or their supposed internal Truth or Credibility, *lie open to the Trial of our Reason and Senses?* The utmost we can say of them, before we consider their Witnesses, is, that they might have happened, or might not have happened. But that they actually *did* happen, depends upon the Witnesses.

We have therefore here an unfair Preference given to the internal Evidence of past Facts, above that Evidence which arises from the Witnesses. Since the Testimony which they give must depend upon the Attestations of these; and if in some Cases we may suppose, that it receives Strength and Advantage from other Circumstances, yet still these Circumstances must be chiefly *ab extra*, very distinct and foreign to the Nature of the Facts themselves, which may be considered as not attended with them.

The Doctor goes on to observe, that Men may deceive and be deceived, and may also zealously

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zealously defend Errors ; all which is very true ; and yet we can often be certain enough that they do not so ; and must often be obliged in Reason to depend upon them. But, says he, " Plain Facts cannot delude us ; cannot speak any other Language, or give any other Information, but what flows from Nature and Truth." Very right, provided they are once proved. But till then they give no Information at all. They cannot be allowed to prove themselves. This therefore is nothing to the Gentleman's Argument and Comparison here, which does not suppose them proved by any Testimony, but sets the Credibility of Facts in express Opposition to that of Witnesses.—Let me just add, that however certain the Authority of plain Facts may be, yet obstinate and prejudiced People may not receive the Information from them which they ought, and may dispute the Credibility of the plainest ; and that there is no Difficulty in supposing, that supernatural and miraculous Facts may be as plain as any others of the most ordinary and frequent Kind.

We are now come to the Conclusion drawn from this Comparison. " The Testimony therefore of Facts, as it is offered to our Senses, in this wonderful Fabric and Constitution of worldly things, may properly be called the Testimony of God Himself ; as it carries with it the surest

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" In-

“ Instruction in all Cases, and to all Na-
 “ tions, which in the ordinary Course
 “ His Providence He has thought fit
 “ appoint for the Guidance of human Life.
 If this Gentleman speaks here of the *com-
 mon and ordinary* Operations of Nature, and
 Effects of natural Causes, which present
 themselves at all times to the View and Con-
 sideration of intelligent Persons; these were
 once known and allowed (but not before
 in many Instances merit this Character. But
 then it is nothing to the present Question
 which relates to such Facts, as are both *pos-
 sible and miraculous*; such as are in some measure
contrary to the wonderful Fabric and Con-
 stitution of worldly Things; such as are out
 of the Way of the ordinary Course of God's
 Providence; and therefore are not to be ex-
 amined and judged of according to this.

P. 20.

I observe our Author, in one Place, speak-
 ing with Dislike of some, who in Subjects
 of this Kind, are “ deserting the Path of Na-
 “ ture and Experience.” And in the Pas-
 sage just cited, we see the Testimony of
 natural Facts insisted on. 'Tis hard to say
 to what End this was mentioned. It could
 not surely be his Meaning to suggest, that
 no others can be allowed; and that all others
 contain in them Marks of Incredibility. For
 this would be inconsistent with what he else-
 where admits in favour of the Miracles of
 Christ and His Apostles. But, lest any such
 Con-

Conclusion should be rashly drawn, it may be proper to subjoin the Words of Mr. Locke. *Tho' the common Experience and the ordinary Course of Things have justly a mighty Influence on the Minds of Men, to make them give or refuse Credit to any thing proposed to their Belief; yet there is one Case wherein the Strangeness of the Fact lessens not the Assent to a fair Testimony given of it. For where such supernatural Events are suitable to Ends aimed at by Him, Who has the Power to change the Course of Nature, there under such Circumstances, they may be the fitter to procure Belief, by how much the more they are beyond, or contrary to ordinary Observation. This is the proper Case of Miracles, which, well attested, do not only find Credit themselves, but give it also to other Truths, which need such Confirmation.*

Essay,
b. iv. c. 16.
§. 13.

I have considered this Paragraph of the Preface, more at large, because it seems to be laid down for the Groundwork of his System; and yet what he really intends by it, is very hard to ascertain. I must go on. This Author represents it necessary, before we can judge of the present Dispute, "to Pref. p. 103
" inform ourselves of the proper Nature
" and Condition of those miraculous Powers, which are the Subject of it, as they
" are represented to us in the History of the
" Gospel," and to learn, "from these sacred Records, what they really were, for
" what

P. 43.

“ what Purposes granted, and in what Manner exerted by the Apostles, and first Possessors of them:” And he taxes all his Adversaries with neglecting this. But may not this Charge be justly retorted upon himself? Has he ever given us a full and particular Account of these Things? I remember nothing like it. The most we have to the Purpose is a Passage in the *Introductory Discourse*, which is but short, occasionally inserted, not so full and unexceptionable as it should have been, and which I have already accommodated to the Miracles I have engaged in the Vindication of.

Pref.p.19.

Vid. not.
in Marc.
xvi. 17.

Several of the following Pages relate to some others of his Answerers. As to the Opinion of *Grotius*, it is point-blank against him. This *learned and judicious Critic* as he is justly styled, *knew no Reason, why some should confine the miraculous Gift of casting out Devils to the first Times of the Gospels; and farther did not doubt, but that the same Promise would be fulfilled even to any one who should preach Christ, in a Manner agreeable to His Will, to the Heathens, who are ignorant of Him.* Other serious Christians have been of the same Sentiments. We are not obliged to defend the *Nay*, there is room to think, that the Gospel has been preached, and is preached to the Heathens, in a Manner agreeable to God.

W

Will, with Success, and without any Miracles*.

I agree with the Doctor, that the modern Missionaries have worked no Miracles, and that *Xavier* had not the Gift of Tongues: But hope to shew, that he triumphs a little too soon, in suggesting that he has disproved the Account, which *Irenæus* gives of this Wonder in his Time; and in his Conclusion from the Silence of all succeeding Writers concerning it. "From this Fact, and P. 22.
 " many more of the same Sort, which
 " might be produced, the Reader will ob-
 " serve, how rash and presumptuous it is,
 " to form Arguments so peremptorily upon
 " the supposed Necessity or Propriety of a
 " Divine Interposition, in this or that parti-
 " cular Case." This, I hope, is not laid down as an universal Rule. Such Arguments are not altogether to be condemned. Cases may be supposed, where a Divine Interposition must have been necessary; where we can no way account for the subsequent Events, without having Recourse to it. And other Cases there are, where, tho' the Necessity of it may not be strictly concluded, yet the Propriety of it appears very plainly.

* Mr. Dodwell has shewn, that Miracles are not now so much wanted to convert the Heathens, as they were at the first preaching of Christianity; because we have many natural Advantages, which the Apostles had not. See *Free Answer*, p. 10, &c.

A Vindication of the

There is a great Difference between these Two, however they are here so placed together, as that a common Reader may not be able to distinguish them.

With regard to the Gift of Tongues in particular, the *Enquirer*, I suppose, will grant, that the Gospel could not have been so soon, so extensively, so effectually preached in the World by the Twelve Apostles without it. For how otherwise can we think these qualified to have spoken to the different Nations of the World in their several Languages? And how otherwise could they have converted them to Christianity? We see from St. *Francis Xavier's* Complaint, that this must have been impossible. And as to other Miracles, we may form a sound Argument for them in the Beginning of Christianity upon their supposed Necessity; as it is demonstrable, that without Miracles it could never have been propagated, and that, if Miracles were not worked in its favour, at first, at least, its Propagation was itself miraculous. The Divine Interposition therefore must here be concluded, one way or the other.

And with regard to any succeeding Miracles, tho' I own the Necessity of them does not appear so strongly to me, and therefore I should be loth to argue from this *alone* to their Truth; yet surely we may without any Rashness or Presumption see and plead the

the Propriety of the Divine Interposition in this Case, tho' not to prove them *a priori*, yet to defend them, when they are in Fact affirmed to have been wrought. In supposing this we suppose nothing but what is highly worthy of God, and extremely suitable to that infant and distressed State of His Church. And therefore, if in History, we meet with any Accounts of this Nature, we are the more prepared to believe them. This is not "to decide upon the Views and Motives of the Deity, by the narrow Conceptions of human Reason," but rather to admire and acknowledge those Marks of Reason and Fitness, which appear in such His Counsels and Interpositions.

Thus, as to the Gift of Tongues, so long as it was vouchsafed, no doubt but it was necessary and proper. It was certainly vouchsafed to others, besides the Apostles; because others in the *Acts* are said to have been thus favoured. When it was finally withdrawn, we are no-where told. Most probably it was sooner withdrawn, than some other Miracles. And tho' we are not concerned to assign any Reason for this, yet I shall beg Leave to subjoin one, which occurs to me, and appears very worthy of the Reader's Notice. It is in short this, That this Miracle was not granted *so much* to attest the Truth, as to enable Men to preach it to Persons of different Nations. I am far from

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deny-

denying, that it is itself a most convincing Proof of the Truth of the Doctrines thus preached. But it is a Proof only to them, who are convinced of the Reality of it. And it may not be so easy for any particular Person, who is a Stranger to the Life and Character of another, to attain such a Conviction. Suppose a Man comes to me, pretends to be sent by God to convert me to a new Religion, and appeals to his talking a Language very different from his native Tongue, and which he says he never learned, for the Confirmation of his Pretensions. It must be some Time before I can make, if ever I have Opportunities to make, such Enquiries, as will satisfy me, that there is no Art used here. The Case of the Apostles at the Day of *Pentecost* was very singular. These were known to be *unlearned and ignorant Men*. Their Education and low Employments of Life put it out of all Question, that they could not by any private Application and Industry of their own attain the Knowledge of the Languages they spake. And besides it pleased God to confer this wonderful Power upon them, in such a signal and visible Manner, and at such a very remarkable Solemnity, as quite excludes all Ground of Suspicion. It was on the Day of *Pentecost*, one of the chief Festivals among the *Jews*, when there were Proselytes of all Nations

Acts ii. 1, at Jerusalem, that suddenly there came a Sound
 &c.

Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind, and it filled all the House, where they were sitting : And there appeared unto them cloven Tongues like as of Fire, and it sat upon each of them.—And afterwards, the Strangers were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these, which speak, Galilæans ? And how hear we every Man in our own Tongue, wherein we were born ? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the Dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the Parts of Libya about Cyrene, and Strangers of Rome, Jews and Profelytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our Tongues the wonderful Works of God. These extraordinary Circumstances carry the highest Conviction with them ; as it was impossible for *any one*, much more for *all these poor Galilæans*, to attain the Power of speaking fluently in so many different Languages, but by supernatural Means.

But then this was the Case of no other Instance of this Kind. And therefore in any others it would not be so easy to distinguish the Divine Original. We read in the *Acts* of some endued with this miraculous Power. If these, for Instance, were sent Abroad into different Countries, where they were not known, to preach the Word ; the Gift of Tongues would evidently enable them to do this.

this. But this alone would not evince the Authority of their Mission. How should the People, to whom they were sent, be assured, that they had not before, to qualify them for this Office, acquired a Skill in their several Languages; for Instance, in the *Roman, Grecian, Egyptian, &c.*?—Other Miracles then may be thought still wanting to be the Means of Conviction.

If this be allowed, and I see no Difficulty in allowing it, we shall soon discern the Reason, why the Gift of Tongues *might* cease before other Miracles. When once a sufficient Number of Converts were made in any Country, and instructed in the Nature of our Religion, these, or at least the Principal of them, were ordained and sent to teach their Countrymen. And, as they wanted no Gift of Tongues to enable them to do this, so we have no Reason to think, that God Almighty would continue such a Miracle, any longer than it was necessary. Whereas these very Persons might want, and did want, the Assistance of other Miracles then, not only to confirm the Word, but to support themselves and others, who were eminent Sufferers for the Truth.

This appears to me to be a probable Way of accounting for the Silence of the Fathers after *Irenæus*, as to this Wonder, who yet have related the rest, without any Doubt. And on Points of this Nature, Probability

is the utmost we can attain to. The certain Reasons of such Dispensations we cannot hope to learn.

The Gentleman proceeds, as follows ;
 “ Whereas the Whole, which the Wit of
 “ Man can possibly discover, either of the
 “ Ways, or the Will of the Creator, must
 “ be acquired by a contrary Method ; not
 “ by imagining vainly within ourselves,
 “ what may be proper or improper for Him
 “ to do ; but by looking Abroad, and con-
 “ templating, what He has actually done ;
 “ and attending seriously to that Revelation,
 “ which He made of Himself from the Be-
 “ ginning, and placed continually before
 “ our Eyes, in the wonderful Works, and
 “ beautiful Fabric of this visible World.”

This Passage has given peculiar Offence. And indeed I do not see what Construction will excuse it from open Deism. The Author, I would hope, did not mean to exclude, but the Sentence, being laid down in general Terms, actually does exclude, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament from being any Means of discovering either the Ways or Will of God. Whatever the Intention of the Doctor was, his Expression is certainly too strong and unguarded. And some Restrictions and Exceptions would have been no more than necessary.

I will endeavour to collect as favourable a Meaning, as I can, from the Context. He

is

is arguing against concluding the Reality of Miracles from the supposed Necessity or Propriety of them, of which I have already spoken at large. It is of the granting or with-holding these Miracles, that, I will suppose, we must understand the Words *the Ways or Will of the Creator*; i. e. *such Ways, His Will in these particular Cases*. These we can only discover "by looking
 " Abroad, and contemplating, what He has
 " actually done;" i. e. I apprehend, by consulting those authentic and credible Relations of them, which are given in History. If this be the Sense, and no other is necessary to carry on his Argument, it seems to be resting the Enquiry on its right Bottom, and the fairest way of determining the Facts. So far then I should have no great Difficulty. But, as to the next Words, I own, that I cannot possibly accommodate or reconcile them even to this Train of Argument. For how the original Frame and Constitution of Things is any Test or Proof of Miracles, which are Alterations of it, I cannot apprehend. The utmost we can learn from attending seriously to this Revelation, as it is here called, so far as the present Subject is concerned, is, to know and distinguish, in some Cases, what is impossible. But as, on the one hand, we cannot from hence conclude, that the Author of Nature never thought fit, in order to carry on the great
 Pur-

Purposes of His Eternal Wisdom and Goodness, to over-rule the general Laws He has established; so neither, on the other, will the Consideration of these alone at all help us to discover, that He has at any time overruled them. This Method therefore, which is here laid down, is plainly insufficient, as it will neither *disprove* the Reality of Miracles, nor *prove* it.

I can think of no other Interpretation of these Words, which I have been examining, that can suit the Design and Reasoning of the Writer; and therefore, till he more clearly explains and vindicates his Meaning, I must have Leave at least to say, that he is here guilty of a very gross Inaccuracy; and that his Argument, if it had any Weight, would bear hard, if not against all Divine Revelation, but the original one of Nature, yet against the Truth of Miracles in general, which cannot be known merely from attending to the original Constitution of Things, represented as the Means of discovering the *Whole* either of the *Ways* or *Will* of the Creator.

We may pass over the Two next Pages P. 23, 24. of the *Preface*, which relate to a Point foreign to our present Question; *viz.* How far the miraculous Powers, conferred on the Disciples, were *perpetually* inherent in them, to be exerted *at their Pleasure*. I do not see, how the Determination of this Point is
con-

connected with the Subject of our present Debate; nor how any Prejudices against the Doctor's Scheme can arise from any Mistake in this Matter; tho' this is represented as the chief Source of them. That such Powers were exercised occasionally, I believe, will own. But whether they were communicated once for all, or immediately before each Occasion offered, and were withdrawn again as soon as it was over, seems a Point of Curiosity, and does not affect the Reality of the Miracles of the primitive Church, more than those of Scripture *.

P. 25.

In the next Page, we have another Instance of unguarded Language. Our Lord is said, by the Command, *Be ye wise as Serpents*, &c. to mean to admonish His Disciples, among other Things, "that the miraculous Gifts, which were indulged to them in this Infancy of the Gospel, were

* See Mr. Dodwell's *Free Answer*, p. 16, &c. where he enlarges on the Supposition, that the Apostles had the miraculous Powers *constantly inherent* in them, tho' they could only exert them in Attestation of the Gospel, and not on every common and indifferent Occasion, as their Humours and Fancies directed. And indeed Grotius, whose Words are cited, is against the Doctor here, and supposes a standing miraculous Power, *admirabilis facultas*, which was exerted on due Occasions. And as to the Passage in St. Mark here appealed to, *It shall be given them in that very Hour*, &c. this appears to be misapplied by the Enquirer, as it does not at all relate "to the Gift of Language or Tongues" naturally unknown, but entirely to the Ability, which they should receive of answering their potent Adversaries wisely, and in a proper Manner.

" intended

“intended to draw People’s Attention more
 “strongly to the Contemplation of their
 “Manners.”—The Precept has plainly no
 Relation to Miracles, nor does our Saviour
 appear to have the Use of these at all in
 His Thoughts, when He delivered it—But
 the chief Reason of my excepting against
 this Passage, is, that I fear some unwary
 Readers may be led by this Intimation to
 think the Intention and Design of those
 Wonders, mentioned therein, to be, if not
 the only one, yet the first and greatest;
 which would be to take away, in a very
 great measure, the Force of the Argument
 from them. Yet I must do this Gentleman
 the Justice to own, that in the *Enquiry* a
 Miracle is said to “yield the strongest Con-
 firmation to the Truth---taught.” Which
 is much more than to draw People’s Atten-
 tion to the Lives and Conversations of the
 Teachers. Nor is this in the Passage before
 us said to be the *sole* Intention of Miracles.
 And yet it is here mentioned *alone*, without
 the least Intimation of any *higher* Use of
 them. And therefore to prevent Mistakes,
 as if it were the only or the chief Use; I
 could have wished to have found a Word
 or Two added, such as, “were *in part* in-
 tended to draw,” &c. And perhaps the
 Gentleman may himself see needful to ex-
 plain himself on this Subject.

P. 214.
 Note.

This

P. 27.

This Gentleman is not contented to take away the Credit of the Miracles related by the Fathers, but is farther of Opinion, that they were withdrawn, while some of the Apostles were still living. He indeed proposes this as a *Conjecture*, and a most groundless one it is, in which, I suppose, he will have few or no Followers. It is very remarkable, that he enters upon this Point with declaring, that the Demand, concerning the real Duration of Miracles in the Apostolic Days, is, "rather curious than pertinent, and the Solution of it of no Consequence to the Point in Debate." We may, I think, claim the Benefit of this Concession. Why must *we* be obliged to shew the precise Time, when true Miracles stopped, any more than this Gentleman? He will not say, that our Ignorance of this at all prejudices the Relations of this Nature, which we have given us by the Evangelists. No more will it prejudice those of the early Fathers, which we can otherwise vindicate. The Apostles are on all hands owned to be the Guides of our Faith; and their Miracles to be the Confirmations of their Divine Authority: Which cannot be affirmed of the Fathers. So that, if these Points make it necessary for us exactly to determine when Miracles ceased, it must be still more necessary for this Author to do it. However, an equal

equal Right we undoubtedly have to require this of him, as he has to insist upon it from us. If it is a Difficulty on one Side, it is so on the other. And if it is "more curious than pertinent," we are neither of us concerned to answer it. He thinks the Power of Miracles stopped some time before the Apostles all died. We have Reason to think, that it stopped some time after the civil Establishment of our Religion. The exact Period neither of us can assign. The Cases, we see, are parallel; nor can I discern any material Difference, any Objection of Moment, which lies from this Circumstance against our Scheme, which does not press equally hard against the Doctor's own.

To proceed. He acknowledges, that the P. 28,
miraculous Gifts were poured out in the fullest Manner on the first Disciples; "in order to enable them more easily to overcome the inveterate Prejudices both of the Jews and Gentiles, and to bear up against the discouraging Shocks of popular Rage and Persecution" — But, "when they had laid a Foundation—and conquered the first and principal Difficulties, and planted Churches in all the chief Cities of the *Roman* Empire, and settled a regular Ministry---as the Benefit of miraculous Powers began to be less and less wanted, in proportion to the Increase of those
G Churches,

“ Churches, so the Use and Exercise of
 “ them began gradually to decline ; and as
 “ soon as Christianity had gained an Estab-
 “ lishment in every Quarter of the known
 “ World, they were finally withdrawn—
 “ And all this—may probably be thought
 “ to have happened, while some of the Apo-
 “ stles were still living.”——This is the
 Whole of his Supposition, in which, I be-
 lieve, he is singular, and will remain so. For
 it is clogged with many Difficulties. It is
 not probable, that Christianity had before
 the Apostles Death gained an Establishment
 in every Quarter of the known World. The
 Propagation of it was, I own, most quick
 and wonderful. But there appears no Rea-
 son to suppose it so very early settled. It is
 certain, that for some Centuries afterwards
 it every-where met with the utmost Op-
 position, and the most cruel Enemies. And
 if Miracles were granted at first to enable
 the Preachers of our Religion to subdue the
 Prejudices of the World, as well as to com-
 fort them under Persecution ; one would
 think, that as long as these subsisted in their
 full Strength, so long such Powers should be
 continued for the same Ends. And this will
 carry our Thoughts much lower than the
 Death of all the Apostles, even unto the
 Establishment of Christianity in the World
 by the Civil Power. It however cannot be
 doubted, but that the Difficulties of the
 Apostles

Apostles lasted, as long as they lived : Their Discouragements were not in the least abated. And tho' I am very ready to allow the Power of the Divine Graces of Faith, Hope, and Charity, when the World is cool and unbiaſſed enough to pay them a due Attention and Regard ; yet ſurely they were far from being ſo then. And therefore Miracles were particularly ſerviceable, not barely to lay the Foundation of our Faith, but to build it up, and even for ſome time to keep alive thoſe Graces, and to make our Religion, and the afflicted Profeſſors of it, ſuperior to all the Dangers and Enemies, which ſurrounded them on every Side.

As to St. *John's* miraculoſly eſcaping unhurt from a Cauldron of boiling Oil, the Doctor ſays, this “ may be juſtly conſidered, P. 31.

“ as the Fiction of the later Ages.” For what Reaſon, I do not know. He has not vouchſafed to offer any---But if it be a Fiction, which does not yet appear, how could he call it a Fiction of *the later Ages*? Can the Second Century come under this Denomination? Yet *Tertullian*, who flouriſhed before the Cloſe of this, mentions it without the leaſt Sign of Doubt, as having happened at *Rome* ; “ Ubi Apoſtolus Joannes, De Præ-
“ poſteaquam in oleum igneum demerſus, ſcript. 5.
“ nihil paſſus eſt, in inſulam relegatur.” 36.

This indeed was written an Hundred Years after the Fact ; which would take from the

Authority of the Testimony, were there any real Objections against it. But as I see none, I think it not difficult to suppose, that Tradition might convey down the Knowledge of so memorable an Event for this Time with sufficient Certainty. Not to say, that *Tertullian* might have had some Evidence for this Piece of History, which is since lost. And upon the Whole, the plain Question is, Which deserves most Credit, the Affirmation of so early a Writer, or the Denial of this Gentleman, who comes so many more Ages after the Fact, and who gives no one Reason for denying it?

P. 32.

“ The chief Instrument, by which they
 “ [the Fathers] acquired and maintained
 “ their Credit in the World, was an Ap-
 “ peal to a divine and miraculous Power.”

With regard to this, we are now ready to join Issue. And the World must judge, whether this Gentleman, as he persuades himself, has *proved the Negative*.—It is hard to conceive, had such an Appeal been false, that they could have gained and long supported any Credit by it, or have succeeded in so absurd a Design. Their great and allowed Credit and Character therefore, itself, in a great measure, justifies the Miracles they claimed and attested. This will appear more fully hereafter.

The *Preface* concludes with laying down the Method, which he would have his Answerer

swerer pursue, not, "from the supposed P. 34.

" Integrity and Piety of the Fathers, to infer the Certainty of what they attest ;
" but *to* refer us to Instances, which tally
" with their Testimonies, and experimentally prove the Truth of them." As to the former Part, it is certain, that the Integrity and Piety of the Fathers will not *alone* warrant this Conclusion. Nor do I know, who has built *altogether* upon it. But it will *in part* justify their Assertions. It is plain from hence, that they did not intend to deceive the World. And, if we have no Reason to think them deceived themselves, we may then " infer the Certainty of what they attest."

But, as to the latter Part, the Way which is here insisted on, nothing can well be more unfair and unreasonable. In many respects, History only relates the general Miracles, and gives us no particular Instances. And would he have us invent them ? Or will he say, that such general Assertions and Relations cannot be true, unless we know particular Facts which tally with them, and exemplify them ? An experimental Proof cannot be had now-a-days, as Miracles are long since ceased. And how any ancient Instances, if we could produce them, can be justly styled experimental Proof *to us*, is not easy to imagine. Nay, such Instances must rest on the same Authority, that the general

Affertions do. And if this is not to be believed, the one must fall, as well as the other. In such a Case therefore, how can "those Testimonies *be* verified by Facts?" When the Facts would have had no stronger Support and Confirmation.—

That we have some *particular* Instances of Miracles recorded by the Writers of the Three first Centuries, is certain. The Reader will find several of these vindicated. And if there are not more, we should reflect, that we have no Historian, strictly speaking, within this time. *Eusebius*, the first Writer of this Class, flourished about the Beginning of the Fourth Century. The Fathers before him left only some short Epistles, or some occasional Pieces, or general Defences of Christianity from the Cavils and Slanders of their Adversaries; or Confutations of the Idolatry, Superstition, and extravagant Heresies, with which they were surrounded. It was sufficient for their Purposes, to refer their Readers to such Wonders, as they knew were frequently worked among them, and to invite them to come, and behold with their own Eyes the Truth of them. And can we think such Claims, in such Circumstances, would have been made, if they had not been assured of Instances enough to have supported and made them good? What other Effect could such
general

general Claims have had in this Case, but to expose those who relied upon them?

That the Miracles of Scripture are related more circumstantially than most of those of the primitive Church are, is true. We are told, not only, that they were worked, but *where*, *on whom*, and *before whom*, they were worked. And this I own and willingly allow to be a considerable Advantage, such as gives them a Superiority and Preheminence above all others---Yet still, will our Want of knowing the Names of Persons, who received Benefit from Miracles, and the Circumstances of Place, Company, &c. destroy their Credit? No surely. There are different Degrees of Probability. The Accounts of the ancient Fathers may be, and are, sufficiently satisfactory, and worthy of our Belief, tho' they do not carry with them the self-same very clear and convincing Proofs of their Truth, which the Relations of the Evangelists do.

And the Reason of this, if we attend to it, is plain. The one did not write with the same Design and View, as the others. In Histories of the Life of our *Blessed Saviour*, The Author and Founder of our Religion, and of some of the First Acts of His principal Followers and Disciples, both written by the Command, and under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit, for the Use and Confirmation of all Ages, to preserve the

Memory and Belief of those Facts, on which their Authority was built, and by which it was fully displayed and proved ; in such Histories, compiled for such Ends, it was extremely proper and useful to enter minutely into Particulars, and to describe the several Facts at large, with the Circumstances which attended them.—But the earliest Fathers neither published Histories of any Person's Actions (a few short Accounts excepted, which are particular enough) nor did they propose to themselves the same Ends in Writing. They did not design to leave an Account of the Grounds of their Religion, for the Conviction of all future Ages ; but aimed at defending themselves, and confuting their Adversaries, and governing the Church then in Danger and Difficulty. And to this End there was no Occasion for them to be more full and particular in the Accounts of Miracles, than they were. And therefore, upon the Whole, their Accounts may be relied on, tho' they fall short, in this respect, of those of Scripture. If there are not other Objections against them, this can have no Weight.

C H A P. III.

Concerning the Miracles of the Apostolic Fathers.

WE are now come to the *Enquiry* itself; which I shall consider in its own Method, as being very clear and distinct. The First Head is employed in collecting the Testimonies relating to the present Argument. The Gentleman begins with the *Enquiry, Apostolic Fathers*, and places a great Stress P. 2, &c. on their not claiming or pretending to the Gift of Miracles, or mentioning any such, as having been granted in their Times. And indeed, if it could be proved, that the Companions and immediate Successors of the *Apostles* had no Knowledge of any Powers of this Kind, as subsisting in their Days, and being exercised among them; it must be granted, that the Presumption would lie much stronger against the Truth of any After-relations. But will the bare Silence of these Fathers prove this? Supposing the Plea just, that none of them have once mentioned such extraordinary Gifts, does it follow, that they were altogether ignorant of them? By
no

A Vindication of the

no means *. The Doctor thinks it “highly
 “probable, that they — would have made
 “some Appeal or Reference to them, in
 “their circular Epistles to the Churches,
 “as their Predecessors had done.” — I am
 of a quite different Opinion. These Writers
 were few in Number: We have but few of
 their Works remaining, and these very short:
 These are chiefly occasional Epistles, not
 wrote for the Conversion of the Heathens,
 but for the Instruction and Confirmation of
 the Churches: They are of a practical Nature,
 recommending Humility, Quiet, Unity, and
 Submission to Authority. This Gentleman
 himself has born his Testimony to “the inno-
 “cent and amiable Character of their Lives,
 “and to the pious, charitable, and fervent
 “Strain of their pastoral Exhortations.”

Putting all these Circumstances together,
 I think, we can no-way wonder at our hear-
 ing so little of Miracles from them. They
 were under no Necessity of insisting upon
 these. The Credit of the Gospel, and of
 their Ministry, were sufficiently acknow-
 ledged by those, to whom they wrote. These
 also had no need to be informed of the
 Reality of Miracles, which most probably
 they knew already. Nay, in several of the

* Mr. Dodwell shews, with great Probability, that, had
 Miracles ceased with the Apostles, their Successors would
 have taken notice of so extraordinary an Event: And there-
 fore concludes, from the supposed Silence of the Apostolical
 Fathers, that they were continued, See *Free Answer*, p. 39, &c.

Canonical Epistles themselves we have no more Mention of Miracles, than we have in these Fathers. I do not mean only the shortest of all, but several of St. *Paul's*; in particular, those to the *Philippians*, *Colossians*, and *Thessalonians*. Which is a Demonstration, that Miracles might have been worked, notwithstanding no Notice was taken of them by the *Apostolical Fathers*. This Gentleman's negative Argument is therefore of no Force at all.

But it may be proper to enquire, whether the Fact, on which he builds, be so certain as he represents it? Whether even these Writings will not furnish us with some Proofs of Miracles then worked? The greatest Men have hitherto been of Opinion, that they have discerned sufficient Allusions to these, nay, some plain Accounts of them. Nor will it be difficult to vindicate this Opinion from all the *Enquirer* has offered to invalidate it.

I shall not insist on the *Visions* and *Revelations* of *Hermas*, the Genuineness of which this Gentleman has owned, by placing him among the *Apostolical Fathers*. What he thinks of these Visions and Revelations, whether they were really divine, or a designed Fiction, he has not told us. However, there is one Passage in this Writer, which seems to point to the extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit in his Time. He is speaking of the Way of trying the Prophet of God, and a false Prophet.

Mandat.
12.

Prophet. "Cum ergo venerit homo, qui
" habet Spiritum Dei, in Ecclesiam justorum,
" habentium fidem Dei, et oratio fit ad
" Deum; tunc Nuntius Sanctus Divinitatis
" implet hominem illum Spiritu Sancto: et
" loquitur in turbâ, sicut Deus vult." Which
Archbishop Wake thus translates: *When
therefore a Man, who has The Spirit of God,
shall come into the Church of the Righteous,
who have the Faith of God, and they pray
unto The Lord; then the Holy Angel of God
fills that Man with The Blessed Spirit, and
he speaks in the Congregation as he is moved
by God* *. Here therefore we have a Gift
attested, as occurring in those Times, which
I know not how to think other than super-
natural, which has escaped this Gentleman's
Animadversion, and which seems effectually
to disprove his Supposition, that there was
no Reference to any such then.

Prelim.
Disc.c.10.
§. 12.

The Archbishop declared, that in the
Writings of these Fathers *there appear suffi-
cient Indications of the Continuance of those
extraordinary Powers*. "Which," says the
P. 4. *Enquirer*, "he endeavours to confirm, not
" by any Facts or express Testimonies, drawn
" from themselves"—How can this Gen-
tleman affirm this? When the *Archbishop*,
in the First place, cited a manifest Declara-
tion of St. Clemens in Proof of his Point;

* The literal Translation is, *as God wills*; but this comes
to the same.

and,

and, in this respect full as sanguine as Mr. *Dodwell*, refers us to the same Salutation of *Ignatius*, as well as to Two other Passages. And these Quotations, when examined, will be found to come up to his Purpose.

The First, in the Original, is as follows: 1 Ep. 5.

Ἦτω τις πιστός, ἢτω δυνατός γνωσιν ἐξέπειν, ἢτω σοφός ἐν δικαίᾳ κρίσει * λόγων, ἢτω ἄγνος ἐν ἐργοῖς τοσούτω μαλλον ταπεινοφρονεῖν οφείλει, ὅσῳ δοκεῖ μαλλον μεζῶν εἶναι· καὶ ζητεῖν τὸ κοινωφελές πασιν, καὶ μὴ τὸ εαυτοῦ. Οὐχ ὡν ἀγαπῇ ἐν Χριστῷ, τηρησάτω τὰ ἐν Χριστῷ παραγέλματα, κ.τ.λ. The *Father* had been arguing against some Strifes and Divisions, which had disturbed the Church of the *Corinthians*, of much the same Nature with those, which had before

* The single Manuscript of *Clemens Romanus* hath not these Words, but διακρίσιν, probably for διακρίσει, which *Clemens Alexandrinus*, citing this Passage twice, *Strom.* 1. and 6. hath in both Places; or else, as Dr. *Wotton* in his Edition of *Clemens Romanus* conjectures, for διακρίσεσιν. Now διακρίσεις πνευμάτων are amongst the *spiritual Gifts* enumerated 1 *Cor.* xii. 9, &c. And this Passage of *Clemens* may refer to this Text, as well as to that other, c. xiii. 1.

Ἦτω ἄγνος ἐν ἐργοῖς] *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Strom.* 1. for ἄγνος hath γοργός; and *Strom.* 6. he hath ἢτω γοργός ἐν ἐργοῖς, ἢτω ἄγνος. Now it is more likely, that γοργός, being the less common and intelligible Word, was changed by a Transcriber into ἄγνος, than *vice versa*; unless both be right. And γοργός signifies not only *quick* and *active*, but *terrible*; and may as well be applied to working Miracles here, as φοβερός, *Psal.* lxx. 3, 5. ὡς φοβερά τα ἔργα σου — φοβερός ἐν βελαιῖς — And thus may answer to the ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων in *St. Paul*; who hath also γνώσις as well as *Clemens*, and πίσις for *Clemens's* πίσος: So that, according to this Supposition, each of these Four in *Clemens* stand in *St. Paul* for miraculous Gifts; and therefore, if he alluded to this Apostle, he must also be understood to speak of these.

§. 13.

occasioned St. Paul's Epistle to them. And let the Reader judge, whether the *Archbishop* has not given us a true Sense of these Words in his explanatory Translation. "Let a
 " *Man have Faith; i. e.* such a Faith by
 " which he is able to work Miracles; let
 " him be powerful to utter mystical Know-
 " ledge (for to that his Expression mani-
 " festly refers); let him be wise in discerning
 " of Speeches; another Gift common to those
 " Times; [*let him be pure in all his Actions:*]
 " But still, says he, by how much the more
 " he seems to excel others, viz. upon the
 " Account of these extraordinary Endow-
 " ments, by so much the more will it behove
 " him to be humble-minded, and to seek what
 " is profitable to all Men, and not to his own
 " Advantage. [*He that has the Love that is*
 " *in Christ, let him keep the Commandments*
 " *of Christ.*]" What can well be more ap-
 " posite than this Testimony? What can be
 " more fair than this Interpretation? If we
 " doubt, that the Gifts here are extraordinary
 " ones, we may be farther satisfied by com-
 " paring this Passage also with the Beginning
 " of the xiiith Chapter of the 1st Epistle to
 " the *Corinthians*. The Purport of both is the
 " same; some of the Expressions are parallel,
 " and explanatory of each other: The latter
 " Author plainly had the former in his Eye. *Tho*
 " *I speak with the Tongues of Men and of Angels*
 " *—and tho' I have the Gift of Prophecy, and*

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understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge, and tho' I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing, &c. Here it is undeniable, that miraculous Powers are spoken of. And therefore we may conclude, that they are also supposed in the other Place just cited, which is an Imitation of this, to have been then existing, and to have puffed up the Minds of some with Pride and Uncharitableness.

It was not right then to suppress this Testimony, which Archbishop *Wake* had so well applied and opened. Nor is the Remainder of this Gentleman's Representation less injurious to his *Grace's* Reasoning. He here pretends to sum up the Arguments which this excellent Author used; and says, He endeavoured to confirm his Point "by Inferences only, or Conjectures, grounded on a supposed Frequency of those Endowments in that Age, and the Communication of them to much lesser and worse Men; on the Sanctity of their Lives, and the Greatness of the Stations, to which they were called by the Apostles; and on the Accounts of them transmitted to us by their Successors." But this is a most imperfect View of the Proofs which the *Archbishop* brings. After the Testimonies and References mentioned, he goes on to shew, that the *Apostles* ordained such *Deacons*, who were eminent for their extraordinary

§. 14, &c.

nary Gifts; and therefore would certainly be careful not to admit any into the higher Orders, but such as were still more eminently endued with the same—that the very Imposition of Hands did in those Days confer an extraordinary Share of The Spirit—that the Scripture bears Witness to *Barnabas*, that he was full of *The Holy Ghost*—that *Hermas* and *Clement* are also mentioned with Honour therein; the *Visions* of the former besides shewing how highly he was favoured, and the great Character and Station of the latter leaving no room to think, that he was destitute of Gifts usually communicated to lesser and worse Men—that it appears from *Ignatius's* Epistles, and from the History of his Martyrdom, as also from the Epistle of *Polycarp*, and the Relation of the Church of *Smyrna*, that they were honoured with the same sort of Gifts, and were all in a lower Degree inspired.—This is the Substance of the Evidence. And can it be thought no more than *Inferences* or *Conjectures*? But it was much easier thus to miscall it, than fairly and effectually to answer it. We see a great Part of it entirely omitted in the Abstract, which Dr. *Middleton* has given of it.

Let us now look back to those Passages of *Ignatius* *, in which the Archbishop says, he

* I have not entered upon the Consideration of the Passage of *Ignatius*, wherein he very earnestly desires the *Romans* not to prevent his Martyrdom by their Prayers. The late Mr. Dodwell

he not only supposes, that such Gifts might be in others, but plainly intimates, that he himself was endued with a large Portion of them. He styles the Church of Smyrna Ελεημένη εν παντι χαρισματι, πεπληρωμένη εν πιστει και αγαπη, ανυστερητω εση παντος χαρισματος, *Mercifully blessed with every good Gift, being filled with Faith and Charity, so that it is wanting in no Gift.* "These Words," the Doctor says, "manifestly signify nothing more, than the ordinary Gifts of the Gospel, *Faith and Charity.*" Then, we have here a most unreasonable and unaccountable Tautology *, which is not to

P. 54

Dodwell looked upon this as a Proof, that the Prayers of the Christians at that Time were attended with some Miracles. And he is at large defended from the Objections of the Enquirer by his learned, judicious, and ingenious Son. *Free Answer*, p. 31, &c.

* 'Tis obvious, that howsoever this Passage be explained, there is a Repetition of the Word *χαρισμα*. But every Repetition is not to be considered as a Tautology. Some have their Graces and Advantages. If there were any Difficulty here, it would be unreasonable to increase it; which Dr. Middleton's Interpretation does exceedingly more than any, which supposes the *χαρισματα* to be distinct from *Faith* and *Love*. We may imagine the *Martyr*, as returning, after the Mention of these Graces, to set forth in other and stronger Language what he had said before. Or very probably his Meaning was this: 1st, That they were *mercifully favoured with every Charisma*: Then he mentions the Effect of this, That they were *filled with Faith and Love*; and then advances one Step farther, That they not only had every Gift, but were *not behind others* in their Degree of any. This way of considering the Words, St. Paul's Language in 1 Cor. i. 7. the Passage which I have cited, and which indeed Ignatius almost cites, directs us to. And not only here, but in other Places (2 Cor. xi. 5. and xii. 11.) of this Apostle, the Word *υστεροει* plainly means to *come behind* or *fall short of*.—Thus the Appearance of Tautology is taken away.

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be charged on any Author without Necessity. Here no such Necessity appears. For the Mention of these two Graces does no-way require us to interpret the general Words of the same. Besides, are these the *only* Christian Graces?—Nay, we are not from hence obliged to understand the *Charismata* here mentioned of the common and ordinary Gifts of God's Spirit. It is no-way unfitting to mix the Mention of these together with that of miraculous Powers. Thus St. Paul joins together such a *Faith*, as would enable him, as it were, to *remove Mountains*, with *giving all his Goods to feed the Poor*.—In short, *χαρισμα* is a Word of some Latitude. It signifies any Gift in general, either supernatural or natural; such as outward Circumstances, or a particular Constitution of Body, or Ability of Mind. But I do not find it used in Scripture for any Christian Grace. Nor do I think that it bears this Sense in any of the Apostolical Fathers. However, it is particularly applied by St. Paul to denote the extraordinary Powers then vouchsafed to the Church. When therefore, so soon after, we are told, that the Church of *Smyrna* was favoured with every *Charisma*, what Reason can there be to exclude those of a miraculous Nature? The Expressions are as full as possible, and must take in all Gifts whatever. It must therefore be proved *a priori*, that there were then no others but those of Faith and Cha-

1 Cor. xiii.

Vid. 1 Cor.
xii. *passim*.

rity, before we can have any Right to limit the Words to these.—We may farther observe, that the last Words are quite parallel with some, which St. Paul applies to his *Corinthians*: *Ὡς ἔχετε μὴ ὑστερεῖσθε ἐν μὲν ἐν χάριτι*, So that ye are wanting, or come behind, in no Gift. We may as well say, that the Apostle's Words imply no sort of Miracle; tho' from this whole Epistle it is as plain, that he allows that these were then among them, and called by this Name, as that the Words of *Ignatius* imply none.

There are Two other Passages of this Author referred to by the *Archbishop*, which this Gentleman takes very little Notice of. In one of which the Father pleads some peculiar Directions of The Spirit.—But what I chiefly wonder at is, his entire Silence here concerning the famous Relation of the Martyrdom of *Ignatius*, which has always been placed among the *Apostolical Fathers*, and which contains a Narration evidently miraculous. This was wrote in the very Beginning of the Second Century; and therefore with the utmost Strictness may be said to belong to this Period.—I grant, that in another Part of the *Enquiry* some Notice is taken of this Piece; and some Endeavours are used (how happily, will be seen) to destroy the Credit of the Miracles. But why was it not examined here, which, according to the Order of Time, was the proper Place to con-

sider it? The Gentleman knows best himself what this Omission proceeded from. It looks as if he was conscious, that if this Account had appeared in this Place, it would have spoiled the Supposition he builds upon, concerning the Silence of the Apostolic Fathers about Miracles: Its venerable Authority might have given these more Credit than he wished: And therefore he chose to postpone the hearing this Testimony, till after his Readers had been prepared and taught to suspect and disbelieve the Witness of Ecclesiastical Writers in general.

P. 7. But he will fully make up for any other Defects, if he makes good what he asserts, that “in some Places, they [the Fathers we “are now speaking of] seem even to dis- “claim all Gifts of a more extraordinary “Kind.” Let us attend diligently to the Proofs of this. *Polycarp* tells the *Philippians*, that he did not write to them of himself, but had been encouraged by them to it, not being equal to the Wisdom of *St. Paul*. This, I trust, has not so much as the Appearance of disclaiming Miracles. It is no more, than a just Expression of the good Bishop’s Modesty, when writing to a Church not committed to his Charge, and disclaiming the Wisdom and Jurisdiction of an Apostle. —The next Instance is still less to his Purpose. What if this antient Writer had declared, as he is here represented to have done,
“ that

“ that it was not granted to him to practise
 “ that which is written in the Scriptures; *Be*
 “ *angry and sin not,*” &c.? This seems to be
 disclaiming the ordinary Gifts, more than
 the extraordinary ones. But really, this is
 not the Author’s Meaning. We have not
 indeed the original *Greek* of *Polycarp* in this
 Part of his Epistle. But the old *Latin* Ver-
 sion, which remains, will not bear such a
 Translation. And *Cotelerius*, by his way of
 pointing it, shews, that he understood it
 otherwise. “ *Confido enim vos bene exer-*
 “ *citatos esse in sacris literis; et nihil vos*
 “ *latet: mihi autem non est concessum*
 “ *modo. Ut his Scripturis dictum est,*” &c.
Dr. Wake translates this literally. If there
 is not something wanting here, which may
 be suspected, then what *Polycarp* mentions,
 as not yet or at present granted to him, is
 not the Gift of Meekness, but of a perfect
 Understanding of all Points of Religion.
 Having lamented some ill Behaviour of one
Valens and his Wife, and prayed for their
 Repentance, he goes on: “ And be ye also
 “ moderate on this Occasion; and look not
 “ upon such as Enemies; but call them
 “ back, as suffering and erring Members,
 “ that ye may save your whole Body: For
 “ by so doing ye shall edify your own selves.
 “ (For I trust, that ye are well exercised in
 “ the holy Scriptures, and that nothing is
 H 3 “ hid

“ hid from you : But at present * this is not granted unto me): As it is written, *Be angry and sin not,*” &c. By throwing some Part of this Sentence into a Parenthesis, we see the Purport of the Whole is clearer: Whereas, if we understand it, as this Gentleman does, it will be impossible, I think, to make out the Connection. For where would be the Sense in saying, Be not too angry with these Sinners; for you know what you are commanded in Scripture, tho’ it be not granted me to practise it? A strange way of talking indeed, and which must discourage the *Philippians*, rather than exhort them! While the other Interpretation is quite natural; and supposes only an honest Art in the Writer, in insinuating his Advices into their Minds, and recommending them very forcibly, by appearing to esteem their Proficiency in spiritual Wisdom better than his own; and thereby intimating, that they did not so much want to be taught, as reminded, by him. The *Martyr*, writing to a whole Church, would not dictate to them;

* It is observable, that Dr. Middleton leaves out *at present*, the *English* of *modo*, which is of Consequence here, as making against the Sense, which he ascribes to the Place. For Polycarp appears to have been very far from having had *then* any Disposition to Anger.—The Translation above is Archbishop Wake’s. But it may be questioned, whether the Word *passibilia* is rightly rendered *suffering*. Strictly, it is only *liable to suffer*. Perhaps, it means here *frail, liable to sin*. The Greek might be *παθητός* or *ευπαθής*. And *παθόν* are Diseases of the *Mind*, as well as *Body*.

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gives his own Opinion and Directions, but submits these to their Judgment, which he confesses to be superior to his own. All this is consistent with the Supposition, that there were extraordinary Communications of The Spirit, and of Power, in that Age; nay, that he himself was favoured with some of them.

Neither is there the least Difficulty in explaining the Passage from *Ignatius*, which is the last produced in the *Enquiry* to shew, that these Fathers seemed to disclaim the extraordinary Gifts. But indeed, it has no relation to these at all. He says, that he "prescribed these things—not as if *he* were "somebody *extraordinary* *," that had Authority over them; "for, tho' bound for His "Name, he was not yet perfect in *Jesus Christ*;" in like manner as *St. Paul* had before declared, *not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect*; "but "now *he* began to learn, and speak to *them*, "as to Fellow-Disciples. For I ought to "have been stirred up by you in Faith," &c. What can be collected from all this, more than the Martyr's great Modesty and Humility?

And indeed, it would be somewhat surprising, if *Ignatius* should seem to disclaim all extraordinary Gifts, when we have this Gentleman's Word, that, "in one or two of

* The Greek is only *τις*; of which see *Acts* v. 36. and *Gal.* vi. 3.

“ his Epistles, he *seems to intimate*, that the
 “ Knowledge of certain Events had been
 “ communicated to him by The Spirit.”
 But there is no Colour to charge him with
 such an Inconsistency. The Truth is, he
 no-where appears to disclaim them. And
 he not only *seems to intimate*, but expressly
 asserts, one of them at the least. *I did not*
 Ad Phi- *know it from any human Flesh; but The Spi-*
 lad. §. 7. *rit declared it.* This is one of the Places
 referred to by Dr. Wake. How this Gen-
 tleman would have it understood, he has not
 told us, only remarking, that “ no other
 “ Commentator has ventured to build any
 “ thing miraculous upon it; ” which it is
 not worth our while to examine; as the Au-
 thority of the *Archbishop*, in such a Case,
 wants the Concurrence of no other Com-
 mentator to give it Strength.

Hitherto then it appears, that Dr. Mid-
 dleton has offered nothing to disprove those
 Passages of the *Apostolic Fathers*, which have
 been thought to claim or suppose Miracles;
 that he has not confuted the Reasonings
 urged for the Reality of these in their Days;
 that he has not given the Shadow of an Ar-
 gument, to prove, that they ever so much as
 seemed to disclaim them. He next takes
 some Notice of the antient Narrative of *Pe-*
lycarp's Martyrdom, which was recorded by
 his Church of *Smyrna*, who were Eye-wit-
 nesses of it, before the Middle of the Second
 Century,

Century, according to Bishop *Pearson*. And as this relates to such an eminent Companion and Successor of the Apostles, it is considered as an Apostolic Writing, and as such has room among the Collections of *Cotelerius* and Dr. *Wake*. That Miracles are mentioned in this, as having been then worked, is past Dispute. The Gentleman I am engaged with, indeed tries to disprove them. But he cannot deny, that such are related. We have then Pretensions to these, in this early Work, contrary to his general Assertion of the Silence of all those Writers about them.

He has not thought fit *here* to examine this Account at large; perhaps for the same Reason which I have before conjectured, as what might influence him to put off the Consideration of the Narrative of the Martyrdom of *Irenæus*. Two Circumstances only are in this Place mentioned, *viz.* The Vision of the Pillow on Fire, and the Character of a Prophetic Teacher given St. *Poly carp*: Which the Doctor, paying no Regard to so venerable an History, without assigning any Reason against it, ventures in Effect to contradict, and in fact explains away. “ The Foresight of his Death, and
“ the Manner of it, in the Time of a cruel
“ Persecution, when his Person was parti-
“ cularly hunted from Village to Village, as
“ the principal and destined Sacrifice, may
“ reasonably be considered as the Effect of
“ com-

p. 9.

“ common Prudence, without recurring to
 “ any thing miraculous.” But how could
 human Prudence foresee the *Manner* of his
 Death? *viz.* By being burnt alive. And is
 not this the extraordinary Circumstance,
 which is insisted upon in the Epistle, as
 foretold by him, as being gathered from the
 Vision he saw?

It may be proper to add, that *Eusebius*
 appears to represent the Vision, as a *Dream*.
 This, however, is a manifest Error. It hap-
 pened to the Martyr, as he was praying, and
 had Company with him, to whom he turn-
 ed and told it. The Expression *ἐν ὀπτασίᾳ*,
ὡς ὅτε is the same with that applied to St.
Paul, *Acts* xxii. 17. only, that here *ἐκστασις*
 is used, not *ὀπτασία*, which yet is used of this
 Apostle, *Acts* xxvi. 19. *2 Cor.* xii. 1.—We
 may farther observe of Dr. *Middleton's* Ac-
 count of this Matter, that it is contrary to
 all Rules of Interpretation, if he could possi-
 bly mean it for an Interpretation, and is real-
 ly substituting one Relation for another. And
 as there appears nothing in *Polycarp's* Cha-
 racter, but what is most wise and good, sure-
 ly it ought to be presumed, that he would
 not have attempted or pretended to foretel
 what would follow, had he not been sure of
 the Reality of the Vision, and used to such
 divine Communications. And this is abun-
 dantly confirmed by the Testimony given to
 his Predictions by the Church of *Smyrna*,
 which

which the Doctor has not said a Word to disprove. This naturally implies, that they had known the fulfilling of so many before, that they could be reasonably assured, that the rest would also be fulfilled in due Time.

Before I conclude this Chapter, I cannot but observe the Concession, which we have in the Enquiry, “for the Prevention of unnecessary Cavils; that, if from the Passages referred to above, or from any other, which may be found in them, it should appear probable to any, that they were favoured, on some Occasions, with extraordinary Illuminations, Visions, or divine Impressions, I shall not dispute that Point with them.” To what Purpose then has he hitherto debated it? “But remind them only, that the Gifts of that Sort were merely personal, granted for their particular Comfort, and reaching no farther than themselves; and do not therefore in any manner affect or relate to the Question now before us.” But, 1. Why should they not? Is not the Question concerning *miraculous Powers*, in general? And are not these Instances of miraculous Powers? And, if there were any such after the Days of the Apostles, does not the new Scheme fall to the Ground? I am the more surprised at his having recourse to this Retreat here, because in the Book he has made *Visions and Revelations* one of the Five Kinds of

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A Vindication of the

of Miracles, which he principally examines. How are these things reconcileable? If such *Visions*, &c. do not at all relate to the present Question, then all that Part of the *En-*
 96—112. *quiry*, where these are considered, no less than Sixteen Pages, are nothing to his Purpose.

2. It will not be granted him, that such Gifts were given only for the particular Comfort of those who enjoyed them. In some Cases this may be supposed, but not in all. I shall hereafter have Occasion to state more at large the Difference between these and other Miracles. But surely the Benefits of these do reach frequently to more than the Possessors. We may easily conceive, that they may be sometimes vouchsafed even for the Conviction of others. But they must often be thought sent for their Admonition and Instruction.

3. However, if it be allowed, that God has thus far favoured any peculiar Age of the Gospel, there will be, I think, little Difficulty in supposing His favouring it with other miraculous Gifts also. I do not lay this down as a certain Rule of Judgment. Yet it appears probable, that, if this was not withdrawn, when the Apostles died, others did not so soon cease. At least, we are thus prepared to assent to the Truth of others, when properly attested. Which I hope will be now owned to be the Case of the *Apo-*
stolical

apostolical Fathers. We have seen plain Indications of other Miracles, as well as these, which then subsisted among them.

From this Part of this *Enquiry* to p. 19. we have several Citations from the Fathers of the Second and Third Century, relating to the Miracles which they have reported to have been worked in their Days. As the several Kinds of these will be particularly examined hereafter, we need not stop long here. It will be sufficient to observe at present, that all the best Christian Writers, the Saints and Martyrs of those Ages, agree in asserting, and that without the least Diffidence or Reserve, a Variety of the most open and public Works of this Kind. This Gentleman owns their Attestations of them to be "strong, explicit, and repeated." They appeal to the Senses of their Enemies for the Truth of them. Nay, *Origen* solemnly calls God to witness, that he did not produce *fictional Tales, but clear and evident Facts.* The Method of performing these wonderful Works is represented, not as the using any magical Inchantments, which were then very prevailing among the Heathens and Heretics, but Prayers to the God of *Israel*, Faith in Christ and His meritorious Passion, and certain plain Adjurations and Exorcisms. Some of these Powers are represented as being common to Christians in general, tho'

P. 10.

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we may easily apprehend *, that they were more eminently vouchsafed to the Pastors and Governors of the Church, who were under the greatest Difficulty, and to whom the Business of converting the Heathen World peculiarly belonged. The Administration of the Christian Sacraments is said to have been sometimes attended with extraordinary Benefits, as well as to have been sometimes guarded from the Profaneness of wicked Apostates and Idolaters by extraordinary Judgments.

The Doctor has only produced a few Accounts, out of many, of this Nature. He has in particular omitted to take notice of the extraordinary Rain, which the Prayers of the Christian Soldiers brought down upon *Marcus Aurelius*, and his Army, in *Germany*, which was a most seasonable Relief to them, when they were perishing with Thirst,

* *Origen*, speaking of casting out Devils, saith, *ὅς ἐστιν ἰδιώται το τοιστον πρᾶτ' αὐτῶν*, p. 334. But surely this is not excluding others from having the same Power, which indeed would be a most unreasonable Supposition. And *Origen*, having thus observed, that private and unlearned Christians, for the most part, or commonly, do this Miracle, adds, that the Grace of God shewed the Weakness of the Devils, and that there was no Need, in order to cast them out, of the Help of any wise Person, who was skilled in Reasoning, or in giving demonstrative Arguments for his Belief. *Vid. Loc.* And thus this Power more eminently appeared to be of God, and not the Effect of any human Arts, or superior Knowledge. And is this saying, that none or few, but common and ignorant Christians, enjoyed and exercised it?

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and which produced Letters from this Emperor in favour of the Christians. I know the Genuineness of the Rescript now extant is called in Question. And yet the Truth of the Fact itself, that there was such a Shower, and such Letters consequent thereupon, is attested not only by *Eusebius*, but *Tertullian* in his *Apology*; and I know not why his Evidence should, in such a Case, be rejected. The Truth or Falshood of a Point of this public Nature must have been known to all the Heathen Magistrates. The Author could not hope to impose upon these. And in a Writing offered to them, to get their Favour, and some Ease from Persecution, 'tis in the highest Degree improbable, that he would venture to attempt it—Nay, the Heathen Writers of that Time bear a strong Witness to confirm his Testimony. It would indeed be unreasonable to expect to find them relating the Fact, in exactly the same manner; this their Prejudices, and perhaps their Ignorance, would not suffer. But 'tis remarkable, that they mention this miraculous Rain in favour of the Emperor, and take Occasion to pay their Compliments to him on account of it, ascribing this Success to his own Piety and Devotion. This is shewn at large by Mr. *Millar*, in his Vol. i. p. learned and useful *History of the Propagation* 343, &c. of *Christianity*, &c. to which I refer the Reader; as also to Mr. *Weston's* Defence of this

this Miracle, lately published. *Dissertations, &c.* p. 63, &c.

There are a Passage or Two more under this Head of the *Enquiry*, which, tho' they do not relate to the *Apostolic Fathers*, I will also consider in this Chapter, as they are not considerable enough to make a separate one.

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“ It is remarkable, that as the Church continued to increase in Power and Credit, so its miraculous Gifts are said to have increased also in the same Proportion : For tho' by an Increase of Power it certainly stood less in need of true Miracles ; yet by the same Power it became more able to reward, and more likely therefore to excite false Pretensions to them ” After such a Declaration, it is really wonderful to find this ingenious Gentleman arguing, that all the Accounts of Miracles, after the Time of the Apostles, must be put on a Level ; and that we cannot admit those of the early Christian Writers, but we must be obliged likewise to swallow all the Fables of the modern Popish Writers. Has he not here given us himself one good Cause of suspecting these, which has no Place at all with regard to the others ? Had the primitive Church any Power to reward false Miracles ? Could any Expectations of Profit or Honour then excite Pretensions to them ? And could the Occasion or Need of Miracles be said to have ceased,

ceased, while Prejudices and Sufferings of all Sorts continued ?

The last Observation we have on this Head is, concerning the Difference between the Miracles of the Apostles, and those of the following Ages. Let us see, how far this Difference is material. The Nature of both is most frequently the same. But “ the
“ Apostles wrought their Miracles on special Occasions, when they felt themselves
“ prompted to it by a divine Impulse ; but
“ at other times were destitute of that
“ Power.” This might also have been generally the Case of the primitive Fathers, for any thing we know to the contrary. But whether it was the Case either of these, or of the Apostles, I cannot think of any great Consequence to determine, or to add any thing more on this Point than what I have said already. “ Tho’ they appeal sometimes,
“ in Confirmation of their Mission, to the
“ miraculous Works—yet we never find
“ them calling out upon the Magistrates and
“ People, to come and see the mighty Wonders, which they were ready to exhibit
“ before their Eyes, on all Occasions, at any
“ Warning, and in all Places, whenever they
“ thought fit.” But did the Apostles address any of their Writings to the Magistrates, and Heathen People ? And will not this account for their not thus calling upon them ?
—Besides, at what time soever these Pow-

ers were vouchsafed, whether once for all, or on every particular Occasion, they were properly standing Powers, for the time they lasted; and I have no doubt, but the Apostles could have done, what some of the Apologists did, in the particular Case of the *Demoniacs*, viz. invited their Enemies to come and satisfy themselves about the Reality of dispossessing them. We may collect indeed from hence with sufficient Certainty, that there were such Numbers of those unhappy Wretches at that time, that the Fathers, who made this Challenge, apprehended, that an Occasion of working this Miracle could not be long wanting; and that God had already vouchsafed Instances enough of these Dispossession, even by the means of common Christians, to encourage them with all humble Assurance to hope and trust in Him for a fresh Display of the same Divine Power and Goodness; when such Occasion should offer, in order to the Glory of His Name, and the Conviction of His Enemies. But nothing surely can be gathered from hence, to the Disadvantage of those Appeals and Invitations.

Nothing can be more unreasonable, or shew a more determined Resolution to cavil and find Fault, than to make what in reality is the strongest Circumstance we can well conceive, to confirm any Account, an Objection against its Truth. And what else

is it to say, that " this confident and often- P. 21.

" tious Manner of proclaiming their ex-
 " traordinary Powers, carries with it an Air
 " of Quackery and Imposture, as it was
 " practised by the primitive Wonder-work-
 " ers ; who — challenge all the World to
 " come and see, with what a Superiority of
 " Power they could chastise and drive those
 " evil Spirits out of the Bodies of Men,
 " when no other *Conjurers, Inchanters, or*
 " *Exorcists*, — had been able to eject
 " them ?" So then, *Justin Martyr* and *Ter-*
tullian are confident Quacks, ostentatious
 Impostors, and are ranked among *Conjurers*
 and *Inchanters*: And all for appealing to the
 very Eyes and Ears of their most powerful
 and inveterate Enemies, in Proof of a plain
 and public Matter of Fact: Whereas, had
 they not been sure of the Truth of this, and
 persuaded, that it would stand the strictest
 Enquiry and Trial, and that not the nearest
 and closest View could disprove it ; they had
 deserved a far different Accusation, and ought
 to be charged with Folly and Madness itself.
 In short, such vain Deceivers, who took so
 effectual a Method to expose, to disappoint,
 and to ruin, both themselves and their Cause,
 the World, I believe, never heard of before.

C H A P. IV.

Concerning the Persons, who worked the Miracles.

- P. 21. **T**HIS Gentleman has a short Section on this his Second Head. It is not easy to know certainly his Sentiments upon the Point. He undoubtedly considers the Persons, who pretended to work the Miracles, as Impostors. But whether the Fathers were ever themselves these Impostors, we are not here told. They are owned to be “the chief
“Persons and Champions of the Christian
“Cause in those Days.” And hence alone it seems probable, that if God was then pleased to communicate such Divine Gifts to any Persons for the Benefit and Establishment of His Church, He would favour these principal Persons with them. Some of them are indeed said to have been imparted even to private Laymen. But ’tis hard to think, as was a little before observed, while these possessed them, that the Bishops and Martyrs were without them; and that those, who succeeded the Apostles in the great Work of propagating the Gospel, did not also succeed them in being favoured with Miracles. It
- P. 22. is said, that “none of these *venerable Saints*
“have

“ have any-where affirmed, that either they
“ themselves, or the Apostolic Fathers be-
“ fore them, were endued with any Power
“ of working Miracles.” What then? They
might perhaps decline this, to avoid the very
Appearance of Vanity and Ostentation. In
the last Page we see them charged with these
bad Principles, as well as with Quackery and
Imposture, for challenging their Adversaries
to convince themselves by seeing their Mi-
racles. How much more would they have
been accused of this, had they openly
claimed the Exercise of these Powers them-
selves? But indeed, whether or no we know
the Reasons of this their Silence, it is a Point
of very little Importance. No sort of Su-
spection can lie from hence against the Facts
they relate. They are owned to have de-
clared, “ that such Powers were — openly
“ exerted in the Church; that they had often
“ seen the wonderful Effects of them; and
“ that every-body else might see the same,
“ whenever they pleased.” And are not
such Accounts sufficiently full, and, sup-
posing the Honesty of the Relaters, suffici-
ently satisfactory? Could it be necessary, after
this, to mention the Names and Characters
of the Persons endued with such Powers?
Can it be supposed, that such particular Cir-
cumstances would add any Weight or Autho-
rity to the general Facts? And if, according
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I 3 the

the Power of casting out Devils, is it reasonable to desire, that the Names, &c. of all such Laymen, or indeed of any of them, should be specified?

But we are next told, that “ the Actors
 “ — in the Performance of their Miracles
 “ were always charged with Fraud and Im-
 “ posture by their Adversaries,” And were not Christ, and His Apostles, so charged by the *Jews*? If the prejudiced Representations of such Persons as *Lucian*, *Celsus*, &c. must pass for Arguments, it will be easy indeed to overthrow the Credit and Authority of the Christians. From such, no more favourable Accounts can be expected. And it is somewhat strange, that any Christian should now think it worth his while to repeat them with any seeming Pleasure, or to lay any Stress upon them. Had the antient Workers of Miracles been no other than Jugglers, and common Cheats, we cannot account for their imposing upon such Numbers of wise, learned, and inquisitive Men, nor indeed for Christianity’s prevailing and gaining an Establishment in the World. There would then have been no Difficulty to disprove the Claims and Assertions of the best Defenders of our Religion; which must soon have put a Stop to its Progress. So that the Event itself is Evidence enough, that however injuriously *Lucian*, &c. might calumniate the Workers of Miracles in their Days, they could never effectually

effectually gainsay their Power, or confute their Pretensions.

From what has been said, the pretended P. 24.
Difference here insisted upon between the New Testament Miracles, and those of the First Centuries, vanishes; since it has not been proved, that the Bishops and Martyrs, who were appointed to preside in the Church of Christ, had not these extraordinary Gifts committed to them. If private and inferior Persons were also sometimes entrusted with the same, to shew the Power and Finger of God more clearly by the Weakness of the Instruments employed, this might also have been the Case in the Apostolic Times. Nay, supposing *bad* Men thus honoured, even this had its Parallel in *Judas*, who was one of the Twelve, who, upon their Return from their first Mission, told their Lord, that *even the Devils had been subject to them thro' His Name*.—However, we have no Reason to believe, that there were ever many Instances of this last Nature.

As to Miracles worked by the Bones and P. 25.
Relicks of Saints and Martyrs, we should be glad to know what the Doctor thinks of the famous Instance in the Old Testament, where God is said to have restored a dead Man to Life, on his *touching the Bones of Elisha*. 2 Kings xiii. 21.
However, it will be time enough to consider them, when we are favoured with any genuine Accounts of such, well attested by

the Writers of the Three first Centuries. We have not in this Page so much as a bare Reference to any one of them. And Mr. *Mede** denies, that any Mention of Miracles done by the Bodies or Relicks of Martyrs was made before the Year 360.

P. 26. We may now discern, how little Reason this Gentleman had to suspect, “ that those
 “ strolling Wonder-workers, by a Dexterity
 “ of juggling—imposed upon the Credulity
 “ of the pious Fathers, whose strong Pre-
 “ judices, and ardent Zeal for the Interest
 “ of Christianity, would dispose them to
 “ embrace, without Examination, whatever
 “ seemed to promote so good a Cause.” There is not the least Tittle of Proof for this Suspicion. The Supposition is every way improbable, and directly contrary to every Account of Antiquity. We may sit down, and, if we will give the Reins to our Fancy, imagine what we please. But this will not alter the Nature of Things, nor at all change the Characters of Men. It has been observed, and indeed it can hardly be too often observed, that there are no Grounds to believe, that

* Mr *Mede*’s Words are, “ But here is the Wonder most
 “ of all to be wondered at, that none of these miraculous
 “ Signs were ever heard of in the Church for the first 300
 “ Years after Christ, until about the Year 360. after that the
 “ Empire, under *Constantine* and his Sons, having publicly
 “ embraced the Christian Faith, the Church had Peace, and
 “ the Bodies of the despised Martyrs, such as could be found,
 “ were now bestowed in most magnificent Temples,” &c.
Apostasy of the latter Times, B. 3. Ch. 3.

there

there were any such strolling Artists in the primitive Church; much less, that there were such Numbers of them; and least of all, that they should have had Power to impose upon all the greatest Christians for Two whole Centuries together. There is as little Foundation for accusing the Fathers of such strong Prejudices, and blind Credulity. They had most of them been prejudiced *against* the Gospel; had notwithstanding embraced it, upon Examination; and wanted the Assistance of no Impostures to vindicate and defend it. In a word, it will appear from the following Chapters, in which their Characters will be considered, that they were neither so very simple, as to be led away with such Cheats, nor so dishonest, as knowingly to consent to, or concur in them.

This Character however, tho' it is very far from being just or true, is yet much more favourable, than what we often find of them in other Parts of the *Enquiry*. Here they are only mentioned as *deceived*, and are allowed to be *pious*. It is not long, since some of them were abused as *Quacks, Impostors, Conjurers, &c.* And before we have done, we shall see them charged with wilfully propagating the Belief of Falshoods; nay, sometimes with inventing them themselves. In a word, any thing is said of them, which will serve the present Turn. And we are left at a Loss, which most to admire, according to these Accounts, their Folly, in
being

being so easily deluded themselves, or their Skill, in so successfully deluding the World.

I have before observed, that *Origen* treats the Accusation of *Celsus*, that the Christians were *γονται*, as a pure Calumny. I cannot but look back to Dr. *Middleton*'s 23d Page, where this Passage is quoted, translated, and applied; but I think not accurately nor fairly. For his *English* enlarges much upon the *Greek*. *Celsus* is said to represent "all the
" Christian Wonder-workers as mere Vaga-
" bonds, and common Cheats." Not in the least. The Words are, ο δε γοντας ημεας καλες, *he calls us*, i. e. not any particular Jugglers among the Christians, but *us Christians in general, Impostors or Deceivers*. The Word has this Sense (Vid. *Hesychium*), and here plainly must have it. For in neither of the Places, which Dr. *Middleton* in this Page has referred to, does there appear to be the least Reference to the Christian Claim of working Miracles.—And farther, why did this Gentleman conceal from his Reader, that *Origen*, in both Places, both confutes *Celsus*'s Charge at large, and treats it as mere Slander and Scurrility? So far is the Doctor's Conclusion, Page 24. from being founded on the Testimony of Friends as well as Enemies. Neither speak of any Wonder-workers among the Christians, as *travelling or strolling from City to City*. So that we have here no Argument to prove this main Point, but the

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Invectives of some of the least serious of the Heathen ; (and these too long since amply refuted) nay, mistaken too, or grievously misrepresented.

CH A P. V.

The Characters of the primitive Fathers vindicated, and particularly of Justin Martyr.

WE are now come to the Doctor's Third Head, where he considers the Characters of the chief Fathers, who have related miraculous Works in their Times. He opens this with telling us, that "the Authority of a Writer, who affirms any questionable Fact, must depend upon the Character of his Veracity, and of his Judgment." I am not clear, what is here understood by *questionable Fact*. The Expression looks obscure. All Facts may be called so, before their Evidence is examined into. Nor do miraculous ones, in general, as such, deserve to be called so, more than any others. With regard to these, which are the Subject of our Debate, Veracity is certainly *One* great Qualification in a Witness of them. But how far Judgment is here requisite, is not so clear. There are *several Degrees* of Judgment, down from an extraordinary Sagacity

P. 26;

gacity and Accuracy, which is the Portion of but few, in comparison, to natural Weakness and Incapacity. There is also a great Difference of Cases and Facts, some of which are more difficult to be searched into than others, and accordingly will call for greater Abilities. But this cannot be said of Miracles *universally*. In most of these Cases, which are recorded and attested by the Fathers of the Three First Centuries, no great Judgment was required to discern the Reality of the Fact, and to distinguish the Finger of God. When we come to view these particularly, we shall find common Sense, and common Understanding, sufficient for these Purposes, to guard against Mistakes and Impositions, and to render the Testimony credible. Ignorance, or even Errors, in other Points, which are not quite similar and parallel, will not prejudice nor invalidate their Accounts of these. If this be not granted, it will be perhaps impossible to find any Witness, on whose Authority we can depend; at least, it will be impossible to be sure of any such.

The better Way of proving the Truth of any one's Testimony is, to give a reasonable Satisfaction of his Veracity, and of his knowing the Truth of what he affirms. The Truth of Miracles may be known, as well as other Facts, and must be known in the same manner that all others are. They are plain open Appeals to the Senses. And therefore, if there

there be just Grounds to suppose, that the Relaters had Opportunities of seeing them, and examining them, I know not what we can desire more.

“ In many Cases, the want of Judgment alone has all the same Effect, as the want of Veracity too.”—Yes, where the want of Judgment is in a manner *total*; such as will incapacitate a Man from bearing his Testimony on any Subject: Or where the Fact is supposed to have happened at such a Distance either of Time or Place, that the Relater might not have due Opportunities of examining it; but must have taken his Accounts from Report and Hearsay. And if this be the Case, his Weakness is more liable to be imposed upon, perhaps, in miraculous Cases, than those of a more ordinary Nature. But otherwise, I cannot see why he cannot be as good a Judge of the one, as the others. The same Capacity, for Instance, which was sufficient to enable a Person to be certain of the Death of Christ, was also sufficient to assure him of His Resurrection. So also, with regard to the healing Diseases, and casting out Devils. It was not necessary for the Beholders of these to be Physicians or Naturalists. They might be mistaken in the Nature, or in the Causes, of such Disorders. And yet, without any extraordinary Degree of Judgment they might be perfectly and reasonably convinced of the Miraculousness

ness of the Cures and Dispossession, which they saw. There appears no more Difficulty here, than to know the Reality of the Distempers, and the Suddenness of the Removal of them, without the Application of any Medicines.

This Gentleman farther supposes, that weak Men are more subject to Deceits, if they are Persons of "greater Piety and Simplicity of Manners." That good Men are not apt to suspect *ill Designs*, is true. But what is this to *open Facts*? Will Piety put out a Man's Eyes, or take away the Use of his Senses?—Pretences in favour of Religion may impose upon him. But surely, not such, as it is so very easy to see thro' and discover. —Besides, if Piety and Simplicity of Manners will take off from the Authority of any Witness, whom would we choose to rely upon? Upon Men of Art and Cunning? These are much more to be suspected of designing to deceive us, than the others are of being deceived themselves. Accordingly, the *Witnesses chosen before of God* to declare our Lord's Miracles to the World, were none of the Wise or Learned, but plain and well-meaning, Men of Integrity, Piety, and Simplicity, who were not the less qualified, on account of these Dispositions, for the great Office to which they were appointed; but who, for this very Reason, were appointed to it, and most certainly deserve the

the more our Credit and Regard.—How far this is true of the Fathers, to whom we appeal, must now be considered more distinctly.

Justin Martyr comes first, and suffers a kind of Persecution thro' Sixteen Pages together. This Gentleman says, “ We have
 “ seen above, that among the Endowments
 “ conferred in an extraordinary manner on
 “ the primitive Christians, *the Gift of ex-*
 “ *pounding the Holy Scriptures*, or the *My-*
 “ *series of God*, was reckoned one.” On
 looking over the Accounts, I find nothing like any Claim to a miraculous Gift of *expounding the Scriptures*. At present, however, *Justin Martyr* is charged with pretending to this; and great Triumph is raised against him on this Account. But indeed it is vain and idle. I will consider the several Passages here cited from him to shew, that he made such a Claim. I will lay before the Reader the Contexts, and the Arguments which the Father is prosecuting; which will be the surest Key to let us into their true Design and Meaning. P. 27.

Let me only premise, that, if he did not give his Interpretations as of Divine Authority, we shall have no Occasion to enter into a particular View of them. His Veracity, in this Case, will not be impeached. And, tho' he might mistake the Sense of some Passages of Scripture; and sometimes indulge

a luxuriant Fancy too far †, in the Way of Allusion; and even, in a few Instances of little or no Moment, argue for Notions, which cannot be defended; nothing of all this will destroy his Credit, as a Witness of Facts, where he could not well be deceived.

In his Dialogue with *Trypho the Jew*, he quotes some Parts of the Old Testament; and, among others, at large applies the xxist Psalm to Christ. After this he proceeds to cite *Matth. xi. 27. All things are delivered to me of my Father; and no Man knoweth The Father but The Son, and those to whom The Son shall reveal Him.* Then

P. 352. Ed. Thirlby.

follows, Απεκαλυψεν εν ημιν παντα οσα και απο των γραφων δια της χαριος αυτη νενοηκαμεν, The Doctor twice quotes these Words, and in both Places puts a Full-stop, as if the Sentence ended here: But the remaining Part of it will much contribute to explain it, γνωτες αυτον πρωτοτοκον μεν τω Θεω, και προ παντων των κτισματων, και των πατριαρχων υιον, κ. τ. λ. The *English* of the Whole is, *He has therefore revealed to us all things, or all the Doctrines, which by His Grace we have understood, or attained the Knowledge of, from the Scriptures, knowing Him to be the First-born of God, and before all Creatures,*

† This Gentleman, Page 116. goes too far in saying, that they who defend the Fathers allow, that those Times could not relish or endure any better Interpretations. The utmost, which can be said, is, that they might be too indulgent to allegorical ones.

and

and yet the Son of the Patriarchs, &c. The plain Import of which is, that Christ had, agreeably to His Assurance, that He only could reveal the Father, by His Grace made known to Christians all the chief Articles of their Faith deduced from Scripture. From hence they collected these Doctrines: From the Inspiration of the Prophets and Apostles, which God vouchsafed to them of His mere Grace and Goodness, they derived them. I see here no Claim, which the Father made to any Favour peculiarly granted to himself; nothing, but what he enjoyed in common with all other Believers. If he here pretended to any Assistance of The Spirit, which is far from being clear, it is that ordinary Assistance only, which we may be sure other good Christians were equally intitled to, as well as he; and by which alone they might with equal Ease have found the Doctrines here mentioned, in the Scriptures. There was no Necessity for any extraordinary Inspiration to enable them to do this. And therefore, on all Accounts, we have no room to suppose, that any such was intended in this Passage.—I shall only add, that the Father, in the very next Page, as it were with a View to explain himself, says of these particular Articles, *We understand them from the Writings of the Prophets.*

Here therefore we find nothing but the bare Sound of Words to this Gentleman's

Purpose. Let us examine another Passage here produced to prove, that *Justin* claimed a miraculous Gift of interpreting Scripture. This also is given us imperfectly. The Martyr takes upon him to prove, that He, who is called LORD in Scripture, was not one of the Two Angels, who went to *Sodom*, but is called GOD; and afterwards desires Leave to cite some other Texts of Scripture in Support of the same Point. Γραφας υμιν ανιστο-

P. 258.

ρειν μελλω, & καλασκευη λογων εν μονη τεχνη επιδεικνυδς σπειδω. Then follow the Words

P. 28.

quoted in the *Enquiry*, Ουδε γαρ δυναμεις εμοι τοιαυτη τις εστιν, αλλα χαρις παρα Θεου μονη εις το συνιεναι τας γραφας αυτες εδοθη μοι. Here the Gentleman stops: But it should be added, Ης χαρις και παντας κοινωνους αμιδωτι και αφιδονως παρακαλω γινεδς, οπως μη και τωτθ χαριν κρισιν οφλησω εν ηπερ μελλει κρισει δια τθ Κυριθ με Ιησθ Χριστθ ο Ποιητης των ολων Θεος ποιειδς. *I purpose to recite to you some Words of Scripture, or to fetch my Proofs from these Writings, not desiring to shew my own Skill in a bare artificial Chain of Reasonings. For neither have I any such Faculty to demonstrate these Points; but Grace is given me from God only to understand His Scriptures; of which Grace I also freely, without any Reward, or any Envy, exhort and beseech all to become Partakers; or, as the Words may be otherwise rendered, to partake of freely and plentifully;*
left,

lest, should I neglect to do so, I should on this Account be subject to that Judgment, which God the Maker of all will cause to be exercised by my Lord Jesus Christ. This is the full Translation of the original Words. And the only Question now is, *What Grace* is here asserted and claimed by the Father? And here, one would think, we are in no great Danger of mistaking: We cannot long hesitate, when he himself tells us, that it is the same, which he thought it his Duty to exhort *all* to be Partakers of. This Circumstance fixes the Meaning of the general Word, and obliges us to understand it here of the *ordinary* Assistance of God's Spirit; which in general is necessary to *open Mens Understanding, that they may understand the Scriptures*, and embrace the Truths of the Gospel contained therein; but which implies nothing infallible or miraculous. For where would be the Sense of beseeching any others, and much more all others, to partake of an extraordinary Gift, which God has no-where promised to grant to all, and which no one could be sure of attaining by virtue of any Endeavours of his own? To exhort a Man to what is not in his Power, is a flagrant Insult upon him. Had therefore this Gentleman quoted on to the End of his Sentence, every Reader must have seen at once, that this was nothing to his Purpose; and that no other Grace or Power was here

spoken of, than what every faithful and pious Christian might reasonably expect, and might enjoy, if he would *.

P. 30.

And this will determine the Meaning of the last Passage quoted from *Justin*, wherein he asks the *Jews*, whether they thought the *Christians* could have understood the Points or Articles he had been treating of in the Scriptures, unless they had received Grace to do so, by the Will of their Author? Οἷδε αν ημας ποτε, ω ανδρες, νενουκναι συνηθινα εν ταις γραφαις ταυτα, ει μη δεληματι τε Θελησαντος [Λαλησαντος, *Vid. Ed. Thirlby*] αυτα ελαβομεν χαριν τε νουσαι; The Doctor has translated the Words thus: “ Whether they “ thought it possible for him to acquire “ perfect a Knowledge of the holy Scriptures “ if he had not received from the Author of “ them this Grace or Gift to understand “ them?” But in what Part of the Original does he find a *perfect* Knowledge of the Scriptures mentioned? And why must we confine this Gift, whatever it was, to *Justin himself*? The Words ημας, ελαβομεν, are plural and seem plainly to relate to Christians in

* I cannot but beg the *Enquirer*, when he reviews the Passages, to reflect, what Unfairness and Partiality it is to understand them concerning a supernatural Gift, which they have nothing to do with; and to interpret the Relation of *Polycarp's* Martyrdom, considered above, which very strongly denotes and describes Miracles, concerning human Wisdom only. This is not taking the Accounts of Antiquity, but arbitrarily fixing any Meaning to them; which will serve present Purpose.

genera

general. And accordingly we find the Author quoting, in Support of the same Point, that Text of *Moses*, *I will provoke them to Anger with them that are no People*; and saying, that the Heathens succeeded as the People of God in the place of the *Jews*; and that they were no despicable People, but elected of God, &c. Nay, it is still more clear from the Words immediately preceding, that *Justin* here speaks of the whole Body of Christians: For he says, *Thro' the wonderful Providence of God, it is come to pass, that we are become more pious and knowing than you [the Jews], who, tho' called, are not so, thro' the Vocation of the new and eternal Covenant, i. e. of Christ.* And then, presently after, he speaks of himself in the singular Number, *I will endeavour*, &c. And in the next Words of his, those quoted, he returns to the plural, and to speak of one great Instance of the Knowledge of Christians, their understanding the Scriptures. So that the Context, both before and after the Words, shews, that in all Probability they must be understood of the same Christians, to whom it had pleased God to communicate His Gifts; and that *Justin* never once thought of claiming any Grace, much less that of immediate Inspiration, peculiar to himself.

We have now examined the Authorities cited to prove, that the *Martyr* insisted, that his Interpretations of Scripture “ were all

“ suggested to him from Heaven.” And we may now ask, How could the Doctor say this, and thence conclude, that no *Credit* is *due* to Justin? Not one of the Passages prove any thing like it. To which we may add, that had he pretended to any personal Gift of understanding the Scriptures, it would be but fair and candid to suppose this confined to the *main* Articles and Doctrines of Religion, and not to extend it to every Exposition we find in his Writings. As to the former, he might have been firmly persuaded, that he did not mistake; but we cannot easily conceive, that he laid an equal Stress upon all the latter. Even in this Case, then, we should have had no Right to accuse him either of being “ grossly deceived “ himself, or willing at least to deceive “ others.” By making a kind Allowance, his Credit and Authority would still have been safe.

That some of his Interpretations are imaginary, I am ready enough to own. His Ignorance of the *Hebrew* led him into some Mistakes. But yet I cannot have the same bad Opinion of his Judgment, which the Doctor expresses — “ his Works are but little “ else, than a wretched Collection of them; “ [wrong Interpretations] the pure Flights “ of an enthusiastic Fancy, and heated “ Brain.” — It is impossible to answer such general Reflections and Censures. In order to judge of their Truth or Falshood, it will be necessary

cessary to read these Writings. We can only say, that the Sentiments of the learned World in general have hitherto been very different from this Gentleman's; otherwise there had never been Encouragement given for so many Editions of our Author: Nor would he have been so often appealed to in Points of the very last Moment by the ablest Men of all Communions. I shall add the Opinion of this learned Editor, who appears often very free in his Censures and Accusations of him; some of which, and even the Beginning of the following Sentence, Dr. *Middleton* has produced, in order to discredit him. * "Sunt qui ejus eloquentiam, ingenium, judicium, doctrinam, in cœlum laudibus efferunt: Sunt etiam qui mirabilem in modum contemnunt et despiciunt. Utrique insaniant. Scriptor est, non ille quidem omnium qui unquam fuerunt aut disertissimus aut acutissimus, sed tamen vividus, acer, et multis nominibus utilissimus," &c. Some there are, who praise his Eloquence, Wit, Judgment, and Learning, to the Skies; others again, in a wonderful manner, despise and condemn him. BOTH THESE ARE MAD. He is a Writer, tho' not the most eloquent or accurate that ever lived, yet lively, vehement or spirited, and on many Accounts most useful.

In reading any antient Author, we ought to consider the Temper and Way of Wri-

* *Cl. Thirlby, in Dedic. Vid. quoq; Reeve's Prel. Disc. p. 11.*

ting, which prevailed in the Times in which he lived; nor should we form our Opinion of his Abilities or Judgment from what would *now* be reckoned Inaccuracies. If we do this, we must condemn the greatest Writers of Antiquity. It is certain, that every Age has had some peculiar Sentiments, as well as a peculiar Stile and Custom of reasoning and expressing themselves; and that, where these are of no bad Consequence, even the wisest and best Men have fallen in to them, and adapted their Works to the Taste and Humour of their Contemporaries. Eastern Writers must not be judged of by that Exactness of Method, which is used in the West; nor antient ones be measured by any modern Standards. Some Arguments, which we at present do not see the Force of, might have been extremely proper and useful, when they were urged; grounded on Notions, which were then received and admitted; and formed in a Way common to the chief Writers of those distant Times and Countries. We should not therefore hastily call *Justin Martyr's* or *Irenæus's* Judgment or Wisdom in question, or think them credulous or superstitious; because they appear to have espoused some Notions, which we do not approve, or to have used some Ways of Reasoning, which do not coincide with the Rules now generally observed. Notwithstanding this, their Testimony may have due Weight: They were

were capable of making a fair Enquiry, and of delivering a just Report. How far a Compliance with the Habit and Relish of the Times will operate upon great Men, and betray them into Weaknesses, we have an Instance comparatively recent in our own Bishop *Andrews*: A Man of extraordinary Acuteness, and solid Judgment; who yet, in his *Sermons*, indulged a contemptible Vein of Pedantry and Punning, and frequently descended below the Character of a grave and serious Man. So that, if we would judge aright of the Merits of any Author, we must make proper Allowances, and overlook some Particulars, which we cannot approve, out of a candid Regard to the Age, in which he flourished.

The first false Opinion charged on *Justin Martyr*, is that of the *Millennium**: Which he is said to declare, “ that all the Christians, P. 31.

* I have here considered the Notion of the *Millennium* held by *Justin*, &c. as an Error. I find, that Two of the Gentlemen, who have gone before me in this Controversy, look upon it in another Light; confine it to the Faithful, the Martyrs especially, before the general Resurrection; and treat it as a Truth revealed in Scripture. See Mr. *Jackson's Remarks*, p. 25. and *Letter to Dr. Middleton*, p. 90. If this be true, the *Enquirer* is still more inexcuseable in making this an Article of Accusation. However, I must own, that I have not sufficiently enquired into this Point, to be satisfied, that it has any Foundation. And if we suppose it false, as I believe it is generally supposed, no Injury could from hence arise either to the joint Authority of the Fathers, or to the just Authority of any particular Father; nor can it be proved, that *Justin*, *Irenæus*, &c. held the Doctrine in the same carnal Sense as *Cerintbus* did.

“ who

“ who were in all Points orthodox, embraced
 “ and believed.” But why would this Gentleman give us only so short and imperfect an Account of this Point, such as cannot fail of leading the unlearned Reader into a Mistake, which a full Representation of the Reasonings here used would have prevented? Trypho had asked Justin, Whether he owned, that this City *Jerusalem* shall be built again, and that their People should be gathered together to rejoice with Christ, the Patriarchs, Prophets, &c.? Or whether he only strove to get the better of the *Jews* in Dispute? To this Justin answered, *I am not such a Wretch, as to be reduced to speak any otherwise than I think. For I have before granted, οτι εγω μεν και αλλοι πολλοι ταυτα φρονουμεν, ως και παντες επισταδε, τωτο γενησομενον· παλλης δ’ αυ και των της καθαραις και ευσεβες οντων Χριστιανων γνωμης τωτο μη γνωριζειν εσημανα σοι, as ye all know, that indeed I and many others are of Opinion, that this will come to pass; but I have told you, that there are also many Christians of pure and pious Sentiments, who do not acknowledge this Tenet.* After which he mentions the Heretics, and, having professed his Design to teach none other than the things of God, he adds, *For tho’ you have conversed with some who profess themselves Christians, who blasphemed the God of Abraham—and denied the Resurrection, think them not Christians, no more than the Seducers*

ducees to be Jews. Εγω μὲν, καὶ εἰ τινες
 εἰσιν ὀρθογνώμονες κατὰ πάντα Χριστιανοί, καὶ
 σαρκὸς ἀναστᾶσιν γένησέως ἐπιταμέδα, καὶ
 χίλια ἐτη ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ, οἰκοδομηθεῖση, καὶ
 κοσμηθεῖση, καὶ πλατυνθεῖση, οἱ προφηταὶ
 Ἰεζεκὴλ καὶ Ἡσαίας καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ὁμολογοῦσι.
 Οὕτως γὰρ Ἡσαίας περὶ τῆς χίλιατονταετηρίδος
 ταύτης εἶπεν, Ἐστὶ γὰρ ὁ θρανὸς καινός, κ. τ. λ. P. 313.
*But as for myself, and such as are in all
 Points orthodox Christians, we know, that
 there will be a Resurrection of the Flesh; and
 that there will be a Thousand Years in Jeru-
 salem, built, and adorned, and enlarged, the
 Prophets Ezekiel and Esaias, and others con-
 fess. For thus spake Esaias of this Term of
 a Thousand Years, There shall be new Hea-
 vens, &c.*

From this View of the whole Argument,
 it is plain, that there are Three Sorts of Per-
 sons spoken of. The *Heretics*, who went
 so far as to deny the Resurrection of the
 Dead; *many sound and pious Christians*, who
 firmly believed this, and yet rejected the No-
 tion of the *Millennium*; and *Justin*, with
 others of his Sentiments, who admitted both;
 but there is absolutely nothing here to justify
 or excuse this Gentleman's inserting the *En-
 joyment of all earthly Pleasures* as *Justin's* Ac-
 count of their Employment in the new City;
 which indeed was the Scheme of *Cerintus*,
 but could not be deduced, in Appearance
 only, from the Scriptures.— It is natural
 enough

enough to suppose, that the Father would give the Preference to such Christians, who were of the same Opinion with himself in a Point, which he thought contained in holy Scripture. And if the Words, *in all respects orthodox*, were applied to these, in Opposition to the *pure and sound Christians* mentioned before; I see no Contradiction here, nor any Consequence which can justly be drawn from hence, but that the Author would not condemn all, who did not agree with him in this Article, not a Matter of Faith, nor ways essential or fundamental; nor would on this Account rank them with the Heretics, who denied the Resurrection from the Dead. However persuaded of the Truth of these Interpretations of holy Scripture, he knew, we see, to think charitably and kindly of others, who did not allow them.

But, if the Translation given above is just, and it is strictly literal, then the Expression, *in all Points orthodox* *, do not denote any one Set of Christians more than others, but Christians in general; nor do they exclude those who did not believe the *Millennium*, but the Heretics only, who opposed the *Resurrection*. For this is that particular Doctrine, which these *altogether right thinking* Persons are said to know; tho' *Justin* goes on farther to prove the *Millennium*, as being what

* See Dr. *Chapman's Rem.* Part ii. p. 4, &c.

he might perhaps in his private Opinion think in some measure connected with it. And in this Light, there is not so much as a verbal Opposition to what he had said but a little before.

I am well aware, that some eminent Writers of our own Church have suspected the former of these Passages of being corrupted, and would read *ε της καδρας*. But the learned Editor did not scruple to pronounce them to have greatly erred. *Vehementer* Vid. *errant viri præclari*. — Upon the Whole Thirlby in loc. therefore, *Justin's* Opinion in this Matter will no-way affect his Credit, or invalidate his Testimony.

It would be tedious, and indeed needless, to go through all the other Articles of Accusation in the same particular Manner. They are no-way new, but only the old Charges or Cavils revived; and have had their Answers frequently from several learned Persons, as this Gentleman doubtless knows, tho' he has not once thought these Answers worth his Notice, or offered a Word by way of Reply to them. But can this be thought a fair Method of Controversy, or likely to bring any Point in Dispute to a proper Determination?

Justin taught, that wicked Angels mixed P. 32. with Women, and begat Demons. What then? Will a false Opinion of this Nature, or Twenty more such, could they be produced,

duced, set aside his Judgment or Testimony of plain Facts? Are these Cases at all parallel? Could the Father have the same, or a similar Proof of the *Origin of Demons*, as he may easily be supposed to have had for some Miracles he relates? Nay, for some of the Operations and *Powers* of evil *Demons*, which probably he was an Eye-witness of, as well as of their being miraculously silenced and ejected? We need not enquire what it was that led him into the former Mistake. We may allow him to have been sometimes out in Points of Criticism or Philosophy; and yet insist upon it, that he is to be believed in other Points, the Truth or Falshood of which he cannot well be supposed ignorant of.

P. 33.

Farther, it is alleged against him, that he quotes the spurious Works of the *Sibyl* and *Hystaspis*, as divine and prophetical.—That he appeals to them is true, as also, that he mentions them in the same Line with the Books of the Prophets. But still this does not prove, that he esteemed or revered all these alike.—However, should we grant, that he looked upon the *Sibyl* and *Hystaspis* as raised up and inspired by God to prepare the Gentile World to receive the *Messiah*; what is this to the Miracles he has related? Or to his Authority in general? He was sometimes erroneous in matter of Opinion: Therefore he is not a competent Witness of Facts.

Facts. Will the Doctor, or can any reasonable Man, maintain this Consequence?

That the succeeding Fathers cite these Writings, is allowed; but that they did not use their own Judgment, but followed only the Example and Authority of *Justin*, is not so certain. However, should we allow this too, nothing would follow to the Disadvantage of our present Argument.

But *Clemens Alexandrinus* also "supposes P. 34. "them to have been inspired by God—which "he confirms by the Authority both of St. "Peter and St. Paul." 'Tis true, he cites a Passage from the *Preaching of Peter*, where in St. Paul refers to the Books of the *Sibyl* and of *Hyfaspis*. So that, properly speaking, St. Paul's Authority only is referred to. And as this Piece is supposed to have contained some traditional Accounts of the Doctrines of these Two Apostles, it might have been cited by *Clemens* and *Origen*, though they never looked upon it as the genuine Work of either of them, nor consequently as equal to their undoubted and inspired Writings. — As to the *Sibyl* and *Hyfaspis*, *Clemens* indeed mentions them under the Title of *Prophets*; which might have some Weight, if we were enquiring into his critical Abilities. But this, I presume, is not the present Question.

Besides, he doth not equal them to the Prophets of the Old Testament; but saith only,

Vid. *Grabe* Spicil. t. i. P. 65.

only, that as God, willing the Salvation of the Jews, gave them Prophets, so he raised up some of the most approved among the Gentiles to be fit Prophets for them in their own Language, N. B. in such a manner as they were qualified to receive his Kindness; and distinguished them from vulgar Persons.

Καθαπερ Ισδαιις σωζεσθι εβηλετο ο Θεος, τες προφητας διδως, ετως και Ελληνων τες δοκιμασις, οικεις αυτων τη διαλεκτω προφητας αναστας, ως οιοι τε ησαν δεχσθι την παρα Θεου ευεργεσιαν, των χυδαιων αδρωπων διεκρινεν.

P. 37.

“ The Heathens — charged the Christians “ with the Forgery of these Books.” Rather with *interpolating* them; for this is all which the Objection of *Celsus* amounts to; and this was more than he could prove. *Origen* is here owned to have “ put the “ Controversy upon a right Foot,” by observing, that no such inserted Passages, nor any antient and correct Copies which wanted them, had been produced. But “ *Valesius* “ remarks, that *Celsus* might easily have “ made good his Charge.” How *Valesius* should know this, unless such antient and correct Copies had appeared, is hard to guess. And ’tis most probable, that if so bitter and inveterate an Enemy of Christianity could have supported so important an Accusation, he would gladly have done it. The Gentleman accounts for his Silence, because “ he

“ either

“ either thought it unnecessary, in a Case so
 “ manifest, or that the Books themselves
 “ were not easy to be found.” Nay, but
 the more manifest the Case was, the more
 probable it is, that he would have defended
 his Charge, and exposed his Adversaries.
 And how does the Doctor know, that the
 Case was manifest? Especially as he adds,
 that the Books were not easy to be found;
 on which Supposition the Case could not be
 manifest. So that, we have here Two Solu-
 tions proposed, quite contrary to each other.
 But neither is this last Pretence any better
 grounded; *Justin Martyr* mentions the *Si-
 byl* not only as *very antient*, but says, *ἡς τὰς
 βιβλίας ἐν παντὶ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ σωζέσθαι συμ-
 λαμβάνει*, whose Books are still preserved in all
 the World. And from the Citations of them
 in *Josephus*, *Strabo*, *Virgil*, and other Hea-
 thens, we must think, that they were well
 known, and in many Hands. So that there
 could have been no Difficulty to come at
 correct Copies enough of them to have con-
 founded the early Fathers, had they either
 interpolated them themselves, or made use
 of interpolated Verses. These therefore had
 reason to treat such a random Insinuation, as
 a pure Calumny; and they deserve to be be-
 lieved, when they deny having had any Hand
 in such Forgeries.

Cohort.
 ad Græcos
 1. prope
 finem.

It is true, that some Christians were call-
 ed *Sibyllists*, for believing the *Sibyl* to have
 been

Cont.
 Cels. 1. 5.
 P. 272.

been a true Prophetess. Yet *Valesius* says,
 “ Neque tamen aut Origenes, aut ullus san-
 “ ctorum Patrum id unquam concessit, ut
 “ Sibyllæ inter Prophetas haberentur : imo
 “ eos, qui ita crederent, hæreticos esse existi-
 “ mârunt, & Sibyllistas appellaverunt.”

Not. ad
 Constant.
 orat. c. 18.

*Neither Origen, nor any of the holy Fathers
 ever yielded, that the Sibyls should be placed
 and esteemed among the Prophets : nay, they
 have thought those Heretics, who have held
 this Opinion, and called them Sibyllists. This
 learned Gentleman could not but know, that
 the Fathers often speak of the Sibyls, as in-
 spired : And therefore he must be under-
 stood to mean, that they ascribed only a
 lower Degree of Inspiration to them, and
 did not put them upon a Level with the
 Prophets of the Old and New Testament.
 And in this Sense probably the Observation
 will be found just. They did not invent
 these Writings, nor corrupt them. They
 found the Heathen World in Possession of
 some Prophecies, esteemed at least to be
 such, under the Name of the Sibylline Or-
 cles. These they applied to their Purpose,
 and used them as Arguments to convert the
 Gentiles, falling in with the common Opi-
 nion, and urging their Testimonies as Di-
 vine.*

“ All the Critics of these Days—confi-
 “ der it [the Forgery charged on the Chri-
 “ stians] as one of the pious Frauds of those
 “ primi-

"primitive Ages." What, of the *Three first Centuries*? Indeed they do not. Some of the most learned and judicious have solidly, and I think unanswerably, vindicated these from any Concern in such an Imposture. I shall only mention Two or Three great Men in our own Church; Bishop Bull*, Bishop Beveridge, and Dr. Jenkins; who have shewn it to be most highly incredible, that *Justin Martyr*, or any other of the early Fathers, should have forged these Verses. To these we may add *Cotelerius*, who contends, that even *Clemens Romanus* might have cited them; *Grotius*, who supposes them compiled by the *Jews* before Christ; and Mr. *Whiston*, who goes farther than them all, and thinks them properly inspired Writings, and extremely ancient. How then could the *Enquirer* say, that all the Critics of these Days allow, that the Christians forged these Books?

If he meant this of the modern Collection or Rhapsody of Verses, which go under the Title of *Sibylline*, this will not affect the Character of those cited by *Justin*, *Theophilus*, and *Clemens Alexandrinus*. Learned Men are agreed, that this is not genuine, and that it was greatly interpolated; but not by any of these Fathers. Bishop Bull affirms the same

* *Bul. Prim. Trad. c. 4. Bev. Cod. Can. Illust. c. 14. Jenk. Reason of Christianity, Part ii. c. 2. §. 3. Cot. Judicium de poster. Ep. Clem. Grot. In Matth. ii. 1. Whist. Vindicat. of the Sibylline Oracles.*

P. 36.

of the *Acrostic* preserved by *Eusebius*, and of the very Lines which *Dr. Middleton* has cited from *Lactantius*, as “ a Specimen of “ the rest.” Which was unfair, as the Lines mentioned in the earlier Fathers are of a quite different Character, and bear no such Marks of Forgery or Interpolation by the Hands of Christians.

It is not agreed, by whom they were originally composed. God *might* raise up some Prophets among the Heathens, as He did *Job* and *Balaam*, and give them the Knowledge of some of the greatest Events, which were to happen in the World. Or the *Jews*, after their Captivity and Dispersion, might have taken some Accounts from the Writings of the Prophets, and dispersed them among the Heathens; and thus they might be put into this Form; and, being of a prophetical Nature, be looked upon as the Works of the *Sibyls*. And when the antient *Sibylline* Books were burnt, with the *Capitol*, about Eighty Years before the Birth of Christ, and the *Senate* sent Embassadors some Years afterwards to bring to *Rome* whatever Verses of this Nature they could find; these Verses were found among others; nor could the Priests, to whom this Office was committed, distinguish between the true and the supposititious ones.

This appears to be the most probable Account; for a farther Explication of which I must

must refer my Readers to the Authors above-mentioned. It is sufficient for my Purpose, that *Justin*, whose Character I am defending, no way appears to have had any Hand in the Fraud. And tho' *some* are said to have imputed it to him, some to *Hermas*, and some to *Papias*; yet as this Gentleman hath not told us *who* they are, much less on what Grounds they did it, the Fathers will stand clear of such a Forgery * P. 37.

“ Thus a most gross and palpable Forgery
 “ was imposed upon the Christian World, from
 “ the very midst of those best and purest
 “ Ages; which, tho' rejected and derided
 “ from the Beginning, by all Men of Sense
 “ among the Heathens, yet obtained full
 “ Credit in the Church, through all Ages,
 “ without any other Ground to support it,
 “ but the Utility of the Deceit, and the Au-
 “ thority of those venerable Fathers, who
 “ contrived and attested it.” Before such a
 severe Sentence had been past, the Gentle-
 man's Proofs should have been much stronger.
 He should have shewn, which of the early
 Fathers *contrived* this Fraud, or at least have
 proved, that some of them did so; he should
 have shewn, that the Heathens, before these

* I observe in Dr. *Cave*, who mentions *Papias* and *Hermes* (not the apostolical Father) as taxed in this respect, no Hint, that *Justin* was suspected. *Vid. Hist. Lit. V. i. p. 58.* Nay he says of the main of them, that they were *Justin Martyre antiquiora*; and that some were extant in the time of *Clement Romanus*.

Fathers cited them, knew nothing of such Writings; or ever disproved them; or that all the Heathens of Sense rejected and derided them; he should have told us, how such a Deceit, so easily discovered and confuted, could have been useful, could have stood its Ground; or how we can imagine, that so many Christian Writers afterwards would have gone on to make use of such a detected, exploded Forgery. And lastly, it would have become him to have returned an Answer to the Reasonings and Suppositions, which learned Men have produced on this Occasion; every one of which appears far more probable, than this his warm and angry Accusation. But nothing of this Nature has been done, nor any thing offered, which fixes the Forgery of what *Justin* cited, upon him, or any other Christian whatever.

Dismissing therefore this Article, let us consider the next, which relates to the Story of the LXX Version, and of the Cells, the Remains of which, the Father says, he had himself seen at *Alexandria*, where he heard the Story from the Inhabitants—And suppose he was deceived by them, and by the Accounts of *Philo* and *Josephus*; will this hurt his Credit, as to other Facts done in his own Time? If he received these Reports too hastily, he might have Judgment enough to learn the Truth or Falshood of others. It is not fair to condemn a Man in
 2 general,

general, or to reject his Authority, because he has been imposed upon in one or two Instances.

Whether this particular Relation was erroneous, is a Point still contended among the Learned. Above Twelve Years since, *the History of the Septuagint* was vindicated in a very handsome, modest, and scholar-like Manner, by a Gentleman who did not chuse to prefix his Name to his Work. To this I have never heard of any Reply. If the Doctor ever saw this Pamphlet, I think he should have taken some notice of it, and not have continued to object against what had found so good an Apology.

Justin's Blunder in making *Ptolemy* contemporary with *Herod* is again insisted on. But to what Purpose? Supposing his Memory or Attention here to have failed him, nay, that he really erred in a Point of Chronology; shall he forfeit all Regard as a Witness of present Facts? However, many Considerations have been offered to shew the great Improbability of *Justin's* making such a Mistake. I shall only refer the Reader to the late Dr. *Twells's Critical Examination*, Part iii. where he concludes it next to certain, that P 45, &c. the Name of *Herod* was not in the original Text. It is not easy to suppose, that a Gentleman so conversant with Books as the *Enquirer*, should be ignorant of these Excuses and Pleas. And if he thought them unsatisfactory,

satisfactory, still he should have confuted them, before he served up the old Objections, without adding the least Strength or Advantage to them.

P. 39.

As more Proofs of the *Martyr's* want of Judgment, we are told of "his frequent Use
" of *fabulous and apocryphal Books* forged
" by the first Christians, under the Names
" of the Apostles." Dr. *Grabe* mentions *Two*
Instances, to which only we are referred.
One of which that learned Man thought
taken from the Gospel *according to the Hebrews*, which is not properly a Forgery, and
much less under the Name of the Apostles;
And as to the other, he was doubtful, whether *Justin* alluded to any Gospels but the
canonical ones, adding one Circumstance
from Tradition. Granting however, that he
cited apocryphal Books, how does this betray a Want of Judgment, or invalidate his
Testimony as a Relator of Miracles? No
more, than his "false and negligent manner of quoting the genuine Scriptures,"
to which he might sometimes rather allude,
than quote, sometimes quote by Memory,
sometimes allegorize upon---All these things
will not weaken his Testimony, as to Facts.

But "Want of Judgment alone may, in
" some Cases, disqualify a Man as effectually
" from being a good Witness, as if he wanted Veracity too." This has been particularly considered above. In the Case before

us,

us, want of a nice, exact, and critical Judgment will not disqualify him. The Gentleman instances in the *Cells* at *Alexandria*, and says, "it is certain, that there never were any such Cells, nor any such Translators ;— and that he was imposed upon by some *Jews* or *Christians* of *Alexandria*, who might shew him some old Ruins, under the Name of Cells," &c. I observed before, that the Learned are not agreed about the Truth of this Story, and that, however idle this Gentleman may think it, it has met with an able Defender. Supposing, however, the Father to have been deceived in the manner here mentioned, he might not upon the Whole have been a Person of a weak Judgment. When a wise Man sees old Ruins, it is not always easy from the View of them to distinguish what Uses the Building was formerly, Four or Five hundred Years before, applied to. And the traditionary Reports of People upon the Spot, if they cannot be easily contradicted and confuted, will in such Matters have some Weight. Nor will it always argue Credulity to give Credit to them.

But it will not follow from *Justin's* being thus imposed upon, that he was deceived as to the Miracles he reports. The Cases are far from being similar. The one relates to an antient Fact, the other to present ones: In the one, better Information was not easy, per-

perhaps not possible, to be acquired; in the other, a common Examination and Discernment must have disproved the Pretences. One Search required a peculiar Turn of Genius, leading to the Study of *Antiquity*; the other only common Sense, Understanding, and Prudence.

P. 40.

The next thing objected to *Justin Martyr*, is his charging the *Romans* with erecting a Statue to *Simon Magus*, with this Inscription, SIMONI DEO SANCTO, which is represented as a pure Blunder, arising from this similar Inscription, SEMONI SANCO DEO FIDIO SACRVM, &c. But this Gentleman cannot but know, that the Father has been vindicated in this respect over and over, by several very learned and judicious Men, who have been far from thinking it "manifest beyond all reasonable Doubt," that he was at all mistaken in this Representation and Charge. And was it then the Part of a candid *Enquirer* to pass them all over in Silence, and never once to mention either their Arguments, or so much as their Names; but to leave the unlearned Reader to imagine, that this is a Point absolutely uncontroverted and given up?

As *Dr. Middleton* has offered nothing new on this Subject, I shall not repeat what other Writers have urged to shew the utter Improbability of supposing *Justin* to have been guilty of such a Blunder, and to answer the

Argu-

Arguments alleged against him on this Head. It will be sufficient to refer my Readers to Father *Tillemont* *, who quotes Dr. *Hammond* and *Fleuri* as of the same Opinion; Dr. *Thirlby*, whose Judgment the *Enquirer* so often relies upon; and Dr. *Twells*.

If indeed *Justin Martyr* could be convicted "of any Fraud, or Design to deceive," in this Matter, we might grant that it would much take off from the Weight of his Testimony. For the more incredible it is, that he should make the Mistake, the less Regard to Truth, and to his Character, he must have had, if he knew this Appeal and Accusation to be false, when he made them.—But if we admit he was here mistaken, it would be hard indeed, that such an Error, which this Gentleman will not declare to be a wilful one, and which the Circumstances of the Relation shew, that it could not be a wilful one, should render his Authority suspected and useless. The *Enquirer* thinks, that one, who could not discover the Truth in this Case, "would more easily be caught by a P. 41. "Confederacy of subtle and crafty Impostors," &c. Such a Confederacy is all Supposition. And a Man, who might be mistaken in an Inscription in a Language, which was not his native Tongue, might yet have

* *Memoires*, Tom. ii. p. 483, &c. *Thirlb.* Not. in loc. *Twells's Examination*, part iii. p. 42, &c. See also the Preface to the last Edition of *Justin Martyr*.

Capacity enough to distinguish a true Miracle from a *surprising Trick*.

The last Charge on this venerable Writer is, that he falsely accused the *Jews* of having "expunged many Passages out of the *Greek Bibles*," relating to Christ. But surely we need not enter upon this Consideration. It is wholly foreign to the present Question, unless none could be good Witnesses, or honest Relators, who were not also sound Critics, and perfectly acquainted with biblical Learning. If indeed it could be proved, that the Father forged these Passages himself, his Veracity and Truth could not be depended upon. But of this his learned Editor acquits him; and says of *Croius*, who, accused him of such Forgeries, that *he hurt his own Reputation more than that of the Martyr, who could not be suspected of such a Cheat*. I translate this from a Sentence in the *Enquiry*; and cannot conceal my Surprize, that it was not translated in the *Enquiry*, for the Use of the *English* Readers, who might want this Guard: As the Sentiments of *Croius*, under the Character of "an able Critic, and Protestant Divine," had been fully represented and laid before him in *English*.

P. 43.

P. 42.

CHAP.

C H A P. VI.

IRENÆUS and the other Fathers vindicated.

Irenæus comes next, and we have much the same Objections against him: That he delivered some untrue Doctrines as orthodox and *apostolic*; viz. That our Saviour was Fifty Years old at the least (it would have been more just, if this Gentleman had said Forty Years at least, for tho' in his Citation P. 45. he reads *a quinquagesimo*, in the Original it is, *a quadragesimo autem, et quinquagesimo anno* *, &c.) that " he asserted likewise the L.ii.c. 39. " Doctrine of the *Millennium*, in the grossest P. 46. " Sense of it," from Tradition, especially of *Papias*; (not in the *grossest* Sense, for *Cérinthus* introduced, besides, the Notion of Indulgence in all manner of carnal Lusts, and nuptial Enjoyments, of which we have not

* There are Two other Instances of Carelessness or Unfairness, in the Doctor's manner of citing and translating this Passage. From his imperfect Quotation it seems, as if *declinat, &c.* were affirmed of our Saviour, whereas it is in the Original said of the Life of Man, that, from the 40th or 50th Year, it begins to verge or decline towards old Age. And then, what is worse, is his inserting, *it was necessary*, as the rendering of *Irenæus*, who hath nothing like it, and only says of our Lord, "*ideo per omnem venit ætatem.*" Three such Misrepresentations in one short Passage, could hardly be accidental. But however this be, such they appear.

here

P. 48.

here a Word) — that he “affirms also, on
 “the same Authority of Tradition — that
 “*Enoch* and *Elias* were translated into that
 “very Paradise, from which *Adam* was ex-
 “pelled,” &c. (a very innocent Mistake;
 all that the Author seems to have meant,
 being, that they were reserved *in Paradise*,
 which is immediately after represented as
 the *Third Heaven*, into which *St. Paul* was
 caught up *) — that he asserts the fabulous
 Story of the *LXX Version*, and that the
 Scriptures were destroyed in the Captivity,
 and restored by *Esdra*s, inspired for that
 Purpose. (An Error arising from a traditional
 Account of the Care of *Ezra* in revising the
 Scriptures of the Old Testament; mixed, as
 such Accounts generally are, with Fable and
 Fiction) — That he believed Angels to have
 mixed with the Daughters of Men (of which
 before).

P. 50.

There is no Occasion to enter on a more
 particular Examination of these Tenets.
 What has been said in Defence of *Justin*,
 is in a great measure applicable here. If
 there is any Argument in such Allegations,
 it is this. Because *Irenæus* was mistaken in
 some critical Matters, or imposed upon as
 to some things which happened long before
 his Time, most of which are, besides, of very
 little Consequence; therefore he is not to be

* *St. Paul* himself uses the Expressions as synonymous.
 2 Cor. xii. 2. 4.

believed,

believed, when he relates Facts as frequently done in his own Days ; and which, if they had not been done, had been the easiest things in the World to disprove. But if this be just Reasoning ; if the Credit of any Writer is thus to be forfeited by every Mistake or Error he may be found guilty of ; I know no antient Authors whatever, the inspired ones of the Old and New Testament excepted, which can maintain their Character, or merit our Regard.

'Tis possible for Persons of Leisure and Application to weed old Books ; to extract from them all their odd Notions and idle Reasonings ; every thing which in the least clashes with our modern Manners and Sentiments ; to call these *Samples of their Understandings*, and *Specimens of their Judgments* ; and by placing them in one aggravated View before the Reader, to endeavour to sink the Credit of the Books, and to expose them to the Derision and Contempt of the Ill-natured and Prejudiced. This, I say, is possible ; but sure it would not be ingenuous. A candid Man would rather take the contrary Method, make Allowance for the Age the Author lived in, consider and admit the Excellencies and Beauties in him, gather what Benefit and Instruction he can from him, overlook and excuse Errors of no fatal Consequence, and interpret every thing in the fairest and most favourable Light.

This

P. 51.

This Gentleman says, that “all those
 “Absurdities [the Doctrine of the *Millen-*
 “*nium* one] were taught by the Fathers of
 “those Ages, not as their private Opinions
 “only, but as Doctrines of the Universal
 “Church, derived immediately from the
 “Apostles, and held so necessary, that those
 “who held the contrary, were hardly con-
 “sidered as real Christians.” That Tradi-
 tion was pleaded for some of these Tenets,
 is true; and had the *Enquirer* been arguing
 against Reliance upon *oral Tradition*, his
 producing such Instances might have been
 pertinent. But what it is to his present Pur-
 pose, farther than it serves to blacken the
 primitive Fathers, I cannot see.—This Ob-
 servation, however, is not true. None of the
 Errors considered were taught as necessary
 Doctrines of the Universal Church. *Ire-*
næus is owned to stand single in his Notion
 of Christ’s Age: And the Reader will be so
 kind to remember, that *Justin Martyr* al-
 lowed, that *many pure and sound Christians*
 did not believe the *Millennium**: So far is it
 from being true, that “those who held the
 “contrary, were hardly considered as real
 “Christians.”

Irenæus is also fallen foul upon for his
 “manner of expounding the Scriptures—
 “indulging a wild enthusiastic Fancy,” &c.

* Vid. *Whitby’s Treatise of the Millennium.*

But

But may not a Writer, who is sober and useful in the main, be allowed a few Allusions, and allegorical Interpretations, the Force of which we cannot now easily discern? And will this make him a bad Witness of Facts? Enough has been said on this Point already. And therefore I shall only add, that in one Instance this Gentleman has taken no notice of what has been urged in the Father's Vindication. I mean, with regard to his concluding the Number of the Gospels from that of the Winds. These numeral Kinds of Arguments were much in favour among the Antients, Heathens as well as *Jews*. And they were particularly used among the Heretics he was opposing. It is probable therefore, that he was arguing here *ad hominem* *. This Sort of Proof, tho' of no Weight in itself, yet was applying to them in their own Way, agreeably to their own Principles, and seemed not ill calculated to silence them.—I own, I see nothing forced in this Account. It could hardly have escaped the *Enquirer*: It merited his Attention, and Reply, if he thought it insufficient. But to revive old Difficulties, without observing that any thing has been offered to the World, by way of solving them, is a Method of proceeding, which may be difficult to be reconciled to that

* See *Tavell's Crit. Exam.* Part iii. p. 56. *Grabe*, in loc.

Candour and Justice, which is due both to the Author animadverted upon, and to the Reader.

P. 54.

“ I have been the fuller in opening the
 “ Characters and Opinions of *Justin* and
 “ *Irenæus*, that I might save myself the
 “ Trouble of enlarging in the same manner
 “ on the rest.” If he has no more to say
 against the other Fathers, than he has said
 against these Two, the Reader will, I hope,
 agree with me, that we need be in no Pain
 about them; that they will stand their
 Ground, and come off very well. Nothing
 has been yet proved against them, which af-
 fects their moral Character, or destroys their
 Veracity. They are represented as weak,
 credulous, rash Enthusiasts. But though an
 Insinuation or two have been dropped occa-
 sionally, this Gentleman has not yet had the
 Hardiness to assert, that either *Justin* or *Ire-
 næus* was a wicked dishonest Man, or in-
 tended knowingly and wilfully to deceive the
 World. Neither will all that has been urged
 even by this prying and inquisitive Writer,
 who, without Doubt, has alleged against them
 the strongest Circumstances he could find to
 prove his Point, amount to a Proof, that they
 were deceived themselves, as to the Miracles
 they related; which they could neither want
 Opportunities nor Capacities to examine and
 enquire into; and which it is absurd to think
 they

they should report at random, and at such Hazards as they must necessarily run.

“ But the later Fathers, generally speaking, do but copy the Notions, and even the Blunders, of these Two. For as they are the earliest, who have left any considerable Works behind them, so they are the first likewise in Credit and Authority with succeeding Ages, on the Account of their Piety, Learning, and Abilities.” One would think such a Concession as this, from one so free from Prejudices in their Favour, should secure the Character and Authority of *Justin* and *Irenæus*, as sound and credible Witnesses of Facts. And indeed I cannot but look upon it, as an effectual Discharge of them, considered as such, from all he has produced to invalidate their Testimony. I know nothing, which can desired more in Support of any Relation of a plain open Matter of Fact, than to be assured, that the Relater is a Man of Piety, Learning, and Abilities, if he had Opportunities of knowing the Truth, and may be supposed willing to examine it. Nay, in most Cases of this Kind, Learning and Abilities are not necessary Qualifications. However, they are good Guards against Deceit, and much strengthen and confirm any Witness.

As to the succeeding Fathers thus blindly and implicitly following these, there is no Reason to suppose it in the Particular before

Thirlby,
Not. ad
P. 39.

us. Nothing can well be more absurd, than to think, that succeeding Writers would go on to relate Facts, *as done in their own Times*, without any other Grounds, than because others of Character before them had related such as done in theirs. If Opinions thus may be taken up on Trust, and propagated or handed down from one to another, yet Facts cannot. The Truth or Falshood of these was easy to be known when they are said to have happened. No Persons in their Senses would appeal to their Enemies for the Truth of them, if they asserted them only in Imitation of their Predecessors. I here speak the Sentiments of the learned Editor of *Justin*: “*Quod enim nos credere vult Basnagius, reliquos in hac re Justinum secutos fuisse, non est dignum, in quo refellendo tempus conteramus. Neque enim semper opus est, ut meris affirmationibus argumenta opponamus.*” *As to Basnage's endeavouring to persuade us, that the other Fathers followed Justin in this Matter* [the Statue erected to Simon Magus], *the Pretence is not worthy of our wasting Time to confute it. For it is not always necessary to oppose Arguments to mere Assertions.*

No Conclusion therefore can be drawn in Prejudice of the primitive Miracles, tho' we should grant, that all the later Fathers imbibed every erroneous Notion of the Two we have been considering; and tho' they took the

the Story of the *Phœnix*, as a Type of the Resurrection, from *Clemens Romanus*. With regard to this, we are told, that "all the P. 55.

"Heathen Writers—from *Herodotus* down "to their own Times, treat it as nothing "but a mere Fable *." And yet both Bishop In loc.

Fell and Archbishop *Wake* consider the Story, Prel. Disc. as what had obtained Credit in those Days; c. 2. §. 25. and both of them cite *Tacitus's* Account of the *Phœnix* said to have come into *Egypt* a

* It is utterly false, that all the Heathen Writers, from *Herodotus* downwards, treat the Story of the *Phœnix* as a mere Fable. *Herodotus* himself mentions it as an historical Narration, tho' he did not think it credible. *Tacitus*, *Dio*, and others, quoted in that very Chapter of *Bochart*, to which *Dr. Middleton* refers, relate the Story as a certain Fact. The *Rabbins* also appear to have believed it. Nay, some have collected it from a Passage in the Book of *Job*. And why should the Fathers be despised for asserting a Fact thus generally held, and held to have happened in *Egypt* about the Time of Christ's Death, any more than *Socrates*, for believing the Story of Swans singing before their Deaths, from the Foresight of the Happiness of a future State? *Plato*, *Phæd. Ed. North. §. 23.* And even if they had not believed the Accounts of the *Phœnix*, they might have argued *ad hominem* from it. See more of this Matter in *Wotton's* Edition of *Clemens Romanus*, p. 121. or, in the Notes of *Junius* and Bishop *Fell* (*apud Cotel.*); or, in *Wake's Prel. Disc. c. 2. §. 23.* &c. It is especially remarkable, that *Celsus* relates the Story of the *Phœnix*, as a true one; and that *Origen* speaks doubtfully of it, *vid. L. 4. prope finem*; and so do many others of the later Fathers, as our Author might have seen in that Chapter of *Bochart*, which he quotes; and yet he scruples not to say, that they "ALL take the Story from *Clemens* of course, and refer us to the same Bird, not only as really existing, but as created on purpose by God to refute the "Incredulity of the Gentiles on the Subject of this great "Article of our Faith." Surely such Inaccuracy, to give it the mildest Name, calls for some Acknowledgments, and more Caution for the future.

little after Christ's Death. However, this Fact is not at all parallel to those, which are the Subjects of our Debate. For do the Fathers successively mention the Account of the *Phoenix*, as happening in their several Days?

P. 56. The Author, having mentioned some Errors, the first of which is the *Millennium*, adds, "in all which these Two Fathers—

"were implicitly followed, for a Century or
"two at least, by all their Successors." How

could this Gentleman assert this, which every Person acquainted with Ecclesiastical Antiquity must know to be false? For within this Time lived *Caius* the Roman Presbyter,

H. E. 1. 3. and *Dionysius Alexandrinus*, who, as *Euse-*
c. 28. 1. 7. *bios* tells us, both wrote against it. We
c. 24. might add *Clemens Alexandrinus*, and *Ori-*
gen, neither of whom were of this Opinion. But as this is only an incidental Point, rather than dwell longer upon it, I chuse to refer to *Dr. Chapman's Remarks*, Pt. 2. p. 7, &c.

Hitherto we have been employed in considering the Understanding and Judgment of the antient Fathers, and what Consequences are drawn from any Weakness or Errors, which may be found in them. We now come to the Question of their Veracity, which is of more Moment, since they must be given up for ever, if they can be proved to have failed in this. The *Enquirer* says,

P. 58. "It may admit perhaps some Debate." Very cautious indeed! "And it will probably be

"thought

“ thought harsh in the Opinion of many,
“ to suspect Men of such Piety and Sanctity
“ of Life, either of the Invention or the
“ Propagation of known Forgeries.” Most
certainly it will, unless we have very good
Grounds for suspecting them. Candid Per-
sons must have sufficient Proofs laid before
them, before they condemn such Men of
designing to deceive us, or joining in any
Roguery. And can we think it Proof
enough, that they made the Mistakes men-
tioned already; that *Justin* has been su-
spected by Men of Learning, who, by the
way, had no Foundation for doing so; and
that *Irenæus* may, with equal Reason, be
suspected, which indeed we are willing to
grant? Dr. *Middleton* asks, “ What other
“ Account can be given of his frequent Ap-
“ peals to the Tradition and Testimony of
“ the Apostles, for the Support of so many
“ absurd Doctrines?” Before we call his
Veracity in question on this Account, it should
be shewn, that he invented all these Stories
of having heard such from the Elders before
him, when really he had received no such
Informations. May not an honest Man be
imposed upon by wrong Accounts? May not
bad Apprehensions, or perhaps bad Memo-
ries, occasion some Errors of this Nature?
Must any Persons be represented as Knaves
on this Account?

P. 59.

But, "if we absolve *Irenæus* from the Forgery, it must be charged on somebody else, more antient still—and gives but a lamentable Idea of those primitive Ages." If the Inventors of it can be known, let them bear the Blame. In the mean time, let not good Men be reproached, merely because they are fallible, and have been deceived. *Irenæus* was misinformed by some whom he believed. How does this affect the Credit of those primitive Ages in general? The very utmost, which we can collect from hence, is, what no one ever doubted, that in the best Times there were some Men not so honest, or not so careful, as they should have been. But it cannot prove, that the primitive Martyrs, and Champions of the Christian Cause, were such. If *Irenæus* was deluded by *Papias*, who was a weak Man, and mistook the Sense of the Apostles, which is this Gentleman's own Account; how does it appear, that either of them invented their Reports, or that there was any wilful Lye in the Case?

In short, much better Authority than Dr. *Whitby's*, whom this Gentleman here quotes, or even than his own, is required to fix such a Charge upon these. The Doctor, as the Passage stands cited (for I have not the Book by me) plainly contradicts and confutes himself with the same Breath, in the same Sentence, accusing *Irenæus* and *Papias* with being at once both deceived and Deceivers;

"who,

“ who, on the Credit of idle Reports, and
 “ uncertain Fame, have delivered to us
 “ Things said to be done by the Apostles
 “ and their Scholars, have shamefully im-
 “ posed upon us by the Forgery of Fables and
 “ false Stories.” So that, according to this
 accurate Writer, they had both received these
 Lyes from others, and yet had forged them
 themselves; which is impossible.—If there
 be any Error in the Translation, it is the *En-*
quirer who is to answer for it; for from
 him I take it.

He says, that the Tradition, “ which re-
 “ lates to *the old Age of Jesus*—may be fairly
 “ presumed to be *Irenæus’s* own Forgery.”
 Why so? “ Because it was never embraced
 “ by any body else, and was singularly ad-
 “ apted to the Argument he was then as-
 “ serting,” &c. This shews, that the suc-
 ceeding Writers would not follow him, where
 they thought him mistaken. But how it
 proves the Falshood of his Assertion, that he
 had this Tradition from the old Men, for
 my part I am at a Loss to discern; and think
 he was not like some modern Writers, who
 make no Scruple of falsifying, when it will
 serve their Argument.

From hence, thro’ the Six following Pages, P. 60.
 the Argument of the *Enquiry* is upon the
 Uncertainty of Tradition, and against build-
 ing any Opinion upon it, and much more any
 Article of our Faith, as the earliest Traditions
 are

are found to be so very corrupt. This is quite a distinct Point from the Truth of the Miracles, which is the Subject of his Book. I might therefore pass over all this Part, without making any Observations upon it. It may not however be amiss to take notice, that all the primitive Traditions are not of one Sort; that some are written, universal, and in the main uncontradicted; that a Stress may justly be laid upon these; that they must be admitted to prove the Genuineness and Truth of the Books of Scripture; and that the most learned and judicious have looked upon them as a Confirmation of some principal Doctrines of Christianity, thinking it not to be supposed, that the whole primitive Church were ignorant of any of these. Other Traditions are *oral* or *partial* ones; and such we have no Cause to depend upon. Some of our best Writers against the *Roman Catholics* have laid great Stress upon this Distinction; have urged the Erroneousness of these latter Traditions; and yet have taken Care to guard against the opposite Error, and to admit the due Weight and Authority of the former ones. The great Lord *Clarendon*

is very clear on this Head. “ Not that the
Animadv. p. 63, &c. “ *Church of England* is an Enemy to, or
 “ disclaims the Use of *Tradition*; but is not
 “ guided and governed by it. Where the
 “ *Tradition* is *universal* and *uncontradicted*,
 “ we have as much *Resignation* to it as the
 “ *Papists*

" *Papists* have; and therefore we do acknowledge the Reception of the Scriptures to be by unquestionable and never-doubted Tradition:—And whatever they believe by as confessed a Tradition, we believe likewise as well as they: But when they urge many things as necessary to be believed by the *Authority of Tradition*, we do not reject the *Authority*, but deny the *Tradition*." That this is the Sense of our *Divines* likewise, I might shew at large; but, for Brevity, will refer to Mr. *Chillingworth*, and the *Tracts against Popery* *.

" It is not therefore strange to find its Authority [of Tradition] carried so high, and in some Cases magnified even above the Scriptures themselves, by all the Dealers in Controversy, from the earliest Fathers down to Dr. *Waterland*." Such general Charges prove nothing but the Heat and Imprudence of their Authors. Such contemptuous Treatment of all controversial Writers, of all Sides, and on all Subjects, without Exception, is very extraordinary indeed. Nor will the few Examples brought justify or excuse it. Dr. *Waterland's* Sentiments we saw before; and it will be easy to vindicate him from any fresh Charges of the same Kind. As to the Dispute about the *Time of Easter*, different Traditions were

* *Vide* p. 39, 64, 110, 262. Tit. III. p. 19. *Patrick* of Tradition, Tit. IV. 190, &c.

indeed

indeed alleged; and this only shews the Point to have been thought indifferent by the *Apostles*, who might allow either Time to be proper to observe the Festival.

Tertullian indeed prefers arguing from Tradition, in Disputes with Heretics, to arguing from Scripture. And Dr. *Waterland* is cited as saying, *that he seems to have judged well upon the prudential Case, and like a wise and sagacious Man.* A Reader, who looks no farther, and will not take the Trouble to consult the Place, must think this learned Writer magnifying Tradition above Scripture. But, in truth, he has, in the Place referred to, so very largely and clearly explained both *Tertullian's* Meaning, and his own, that it was unfair to quote only a Sentence or two, detached from what went before and followed; whereas a just Representation of his whole Reasoning would have very sufficiently acquitted him; nay, would have shewn him to have held the direct contrary Tenet to that which he is here accused of. It is plain from hence, that all the Caution a Man can take will not prevent his being mistaken and misrepresented by some Men. The Reasoning is long, and I wish the Reader would turn to it. The Substance is, that in verbal Disputes with Heretics, who would not own the Scriptures, or would cavil about the Meaning of them, it would be vain to appeal to them; but, as it was easy then to

Importance, p. 376, &c.

sec,

see, who had succeeded to the Apostles in the Church, it was better to rest such Disputes upon Tradition. This was what Dr. *Waterland* approved of, adding afterwards, that, now, Scripture is the only Ground of Faith; and that Antiquity is only a *subordinate* Proof, or Help to fix the true Interpretation of Scripture. — Besides, the Heretics, against whom *Irenæus* and *Tertullian* disputed, held either that the Scriptures were corrupted, or that the Apostles were not acquainted with the Whole of Christianity, or concealed some main Articles of it. All this the Fathers disproved, by shewing, that the Faith, which the Scriptures taught, and no other, was the Faith delivered down in the Creeds of every Church. And surely, in this View too, they are to be commended. We cannot, in such a Case, imagine a more proper or a stronger Proof. — These particular Circumstances should not have been suppressed.

I shall remark but upon One Sentence more relating to this Point. The *Unanimity* of the Fathers in delivering any of the main Articles of our Faith has been looked upon as a very strong Presumption of their Truth, and in some measure a *Proof* of it, tho' not equal to that from Scripture. But if this be so, the Gentleman says, “ it would necessarily establish all those monstrous Doctrines above specified; since it would be difficult
“ to

“ to produce any other whatsoever, in which
 “ there was so great an Harmony among
 “ them,” &c. But nothing can well be more
 wild than this Consequence. For of these
 Opinions, the *Millennium*, the *old Age of*
Christ, the *Translation of Enoch into Adam’s*
Paradise, had no such general Consent of
 the Church; and as to the *Angels begetting*
Demons, tho’ this was a common Notion,
 yet it was no Point of Faith: And it is easy
 to conceive, that they might err in some few
 Matters of this Nature, and yet deserve some
 Credit and Authority, when they unani-
 mously report and witness the great Articles
 of Faith and Doctrine, which were believed
 among them.

We may now return from this Digression,
 for as such it may be considered, from the
 declared Purpose of the *Enquiry*. Dr. *Mid-*
dleton next observes, that it “ was universally
 “ received and believed through all Ages of
 “ the primitive Church, that there were a
 “ Number of Magicians, Necromancers, or
 “ Conjurers, both among the Gentiles and
 “ the heretical Christians, who had each their
 “ particular Demons, or evil Spirits, for their
 “ Associates, perpetually attending on their
 “ Persons, and obsequious to their Com-
 “ mands; by whose Help they could per-
 “ form Miracles, foretel future Events, call
 “ up the Souls of the Dead, exhibit them
 “ to open View, and infuse into People
 “ what-

“ whatever Dreams or Visions they thought fit.” I have set down these Words at large, as I look upon this as a Point the most to his Purpose of any that he has yet produced. Here is a Fact said to be “ constantly affirmed by the primitive Writers and Apologists,” which it is plain this Gentleman thinks entirely false and incredible. Two things we may properly enquire into; How far it is asserted by them—and how far it is false.

Justin Martyr is the First Witness produced. And it is true, that he mentions several Powers of Necromancy and Magic, as what ought to convince the Heathens, that the Souls of Men exist still after Death, and are in a State of Sensation. As these Powers were then generally believed, this Consequence was not to be rejected. Whether *Justin* was himself satisfied of the Truth of this common Opinion, or not, his Argument is the same. From the Sentence here quoted, we cannot conclude that he was. He may very probably be supposed to argue in this Place *ad hominem*. Addressing the Gentiles, he takes the Advantage of some Principles, which they acknowledged, and some Powers, that were claimed among them. And this Supposition is much confirmed from what follows, where he argues from other Topics, such as he cannot well be supposed to have believed himself, yet such as were properly urged

urged against the Heathens, and must be thought to have great Weight with them. Not only the *Amphilochian*, *Pythian*, *Dodonæan*, and other Oracles, but the Writings of *Empedocles*, *Pythagoras*, *Plato*, and *Socrates*, and in particular the Accounts of *Homer's Ditch*, and the *Descent of Ulysses into Hell*, and Conversation with the Dead, are mentioned as Arguments of the same Point. But these were purely *ad hominem*, and no-way shew, that the Father at all credited such Authorities.

In other Places of his Works he indeed charged both the Heathens and Heretics with giving Heed to *Demons*, or *evil Spirits*, with being influenced and actuated by them, and being enabled by them to work lying Wonders. But that this Charge was not strictly just and true, it will be much easier to assert, than to prove.

P. 67. As to *Lactantius*, who is next cited, it is certain, that he is arguing from Heathen Authorities to prove the Immortality of the Soul. And it is very remarkable, that in

Div. Inst. the beginning of this Section, when he enters upon this Point, he expressly declines appealing to the Prophets, but chuses rather to cite the Testimonies of *those, whom they, who rejected the Truth, must of Necessity believe*. “*Neque nunc Prophetas in Testimonium vocabo—sed eos potius, quibus*”
 l. 7. c. 13. “*istos, qui respuunt veritatem, credere fit*”
 “*necessè.*”

"neceſſe." And then he quotes *Hermes*, the Oracle of *Apollo Mileſius*; and afterwards mentions ſome of the Arts and Practices of the *Magicians*, which were believed in the Heathen World, in Support and Confirmation of the ſame.

Here, again, we may ſay, that *Lactantius* might do all this, tho' he himſelf gave no ſort of Credit to ſuch Kind of Arguments and Authorities. It was ſufficient, if they were allowed and held by thoſe, whom he was applying to, and diſputing with. And that this was the whole Caſe, the manner, in which he introduces theſe Topics, and the Sentence we have juſt taken from him, appears very ſtrongly to intimate. And if any Part of the Sentence cited from him looks the other Way, yet perhaps this might be only an Inaccuracy, that dropp'd from the Author in the Warmth of Writing.

But, ſuppoſing it to have been otherwiſe, and that *Lactantius* really believed the Arts of *Necromancers*, which he has mentioned; what would follow? The moſt that can be made of ſuch a Conceſſion is, that he was deceived by ſome Pretences, and historical Relations, the Truth of which moſt probably he had never any Opportunity of enquiring into, and by which many learned Men of his and the preceding Times had been miſſed alſo. How will this affect the Credit of his Relations, where the Facts re-

N

lated

lated are such, as he could not but know the Truth or Falshood of? — However, from other Places of his Book we may learn his Sentiments about these Matters: That all *Necromancy* was the Invention of *Devils*, who by their Knowledge and Power could work Prodigies, and lying Wonders, imposing upon the Senses of Men, and leading them away from the Truth*. *Vid. lib. ii. §. 7, &c.* And I know no Reason to think, that he was mistaken in this Opinion; unless it should be pleaded, that the Devils are not permitted to work such *now*. But surely no Conclusion can be drawn from hence.

It is true, that *Simon Magus* is represented to have declared, that he wrought his amazing Works by the Help of the Soul of a young Boy, who had been violently put to Death, &c. But be this true or false, what is it to the Fathers? The Author of the *Recognitions*, who gives us this Representation, does not appear to have believed it. *Ch. 16.* speaking of *Simon's* persuading himself, “*Quod animarum obedientia ad*

* Magorum quoque ars omnis ac potentia horum aspirationibus constat, a quibus invocati visus hominum prestigis obcæcantibus fallunt; ut non videant ea quæ sunt; & videre se putent illa quæ non sunt, &c. p. 193. Sed omnia ista fallaciæ sunt, p. 198. Quid ergo dicemus Magiam? Quod omnes pœne, fallaciam. Sed ratio fallaciæ solos non fugit. Christianos, qui spiritalia nequitiæ, non quidem scia conscientia, sed inimica scientia novimus. *Tertul. de anim.* 68, 69.

“*scelerum suorum utatur ministerium,*” he adds, “*re autem vera a Dæmonibus illuditur.*”

I have no Exception to make against the Citations from *Irenæus*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Tertullian*, and *Cyprian*. The former accuses some of the earliest Heretics of practising magical Arts by the Assistance of *Demons*; in which I see nothing improbable. The Second says, the Magicians even boasted of their Assistance; which also may very well be. The Two last describe the Powers and Operations of *Demons* very particularly: Which Descriptions, *for the most part*, may be supposed true. We may easily believe, that these evil Spirits were permitted then to torment both Mens Minds and Bodies; that, by ceasing their Injuries, they might in Appearance work Cures, to support their Credit; that they assisted the Magicians and Soothsayers, “involving Falshood always with Truth, and being themselves deceived, as well as deceiving others.” There is nothing in all this but what is agreeable enough to their Nature and Disposition; nothing but what the early Fathers might have had Evidence enough of; nothing but what the Scripture in a great measure confirms. Indeed, they mention besides, that the *Demons* were fatted with the Steams of the Victims. Which, as they could have no Proof of, may well be thought a groundless and erroneous

Cypr.

neous Notion ; but which certainly ought not to take away the Force of their Witness, when they assert other Matters capable of the strictest Proof, and occurring frequently to them.

This Gentleman represents it as “ the
“ common Opinion of all the Fathers, taken,
“ as usual, upon Trust, from the Authority
“ of *Justin Martyr*, who was probably the
“ Inventor of it, that the *Demons*—began to
“ want the rich Fumes and the Fat of Sa-
“ crifices to strengthen them for the Enjoy-
“ ment of their lustful Pleasures.” The
only Proof we have of this is one Line from
Justin Martyr ; which would be insufficient,
were it ever so pertinent. But I much que-
stion, whether it is at all applicable to this
Purpose. The *English* of it is nothing more,
than that, *after the Demons had enslaved them-
selves to their Lusts and Passions, they wanted
Libations, and Incense, and Victims* * : But
that this was *to strengthen them* &c. is not
said. And all that is meant may be, that
after they were become wicked, they wanted
to become the Objects of Idolatry. As to
the other Fathers, who are here universally
charged, not one of them is so much as re-
ferred to ; and it is not easy to vindicate,
where we know not the particular Accusa-
tions.—To speak what occurs to me at

* Ων ενδεεις γεγονασι μετὰ το παθεσθαι επιθυμιων δού-
λωθηναι. Apol.

present about the matter: Great Stress was always laid on the *Steams* or *Fume* of the burnt Sacrifices. We find Instances of this in Heathen Writers. * *Homer* often mentions them. They were thought pleasing and acceptable to the Gods. Hence, by an easy Figure, the Gods might be said to have been *fed* by them. The Fathers believed, and with just Reason, that the Heathen Idolatry was contrived and kept up by *Demons* or *Devils*. These some of them thought not pure Spirits, but light thin Bodies, which required some Support and Nourishment. This false Philosophy might lead those, who held it, into a Notion, that Sacrifices were such Support. This most probably was the Case: And if it was so, can any candid Man from hence say, that they are false Witnesses of Facts?

That they thought the Pagan Idolatry, and the whole Art of Magic, to “ have been “ managed by the Craft and Agency of *Demons*,” I have owned. But that this Opinion “ is not only a Proof of the grossest P. 70. “ Credulity, but of that peculiar Species of “ it, which, of all others, lays a Man the “ most open to the delusive Arts of Impo- “ stors,” is far from being so certain. I will be so just to this Gentleman, as to give

* Κνισση δ' ἄρ' αὖρον ἰκ' ἐλίσσομένη περὶ καπνοῦ.

Il. i. 317.

Et Diis acceptus penetravit in æthera nidor.

Ovid. Metam. xii. 153.

the whole Argument in his own Words.
 “ For a Mind so totally possessed with su-
 “ perstitious Fancies, and disturbed by vain
 “ Terrors, could not have either the Judg-
 “ ment to discern, or the Inclination to exa-
 “ mine, or the Courage even to suspect,
 “ the Pretensions of those vagrant Jugglers,
 “ who in those primitive Ages were so nu-
 “ merous, and so industriously employed in
 “ the Affair of deluding their Fellow-crea-
 “ tures.” If a round and handsome Period
 be taken as a Proof, the Point is proved. But
 the *superstitious Fancies*, and *vain Terrors*,
 in one Part of the Sentence, are as far from
 being the Truth of the Case, as the *Number*
of the vagrant Jugglers supposed to be in the
 Church, in the other. Do the Christian Fa-
 thers once speak *with Terror* of the Won-
 ders of the Heathens or Heretics, or of the
 Power of the *Demons* to whom they ascribe
 them? Not in the least. They wanted nei-
 ther Inclination nor Judgment to disprove
 them: They actually did disprove them. It
 is all Imagination to suppose them continu-
 ally afraid of being possessed and tormented
 themselves. Nor were the Wonders done in
 the primitive Church at all like those of
 Magic, nor were any of its Arts used by the
 Christians. They never believed, that evil Spi-
 rits could work *real* Miracles, equal to those
 of Scripture, or of Christians in their own
 Times; but lying Wonders, Prodigies, ap-
 pearing

pearing Miracles, they did believe them capable of working. Not that they were under the least superstitious Apprehension of them. Nor did this lead them to admit any Pretences of Miracles in favour of the Truth, right or wrong; which also they had no Occasion to appeal to, as the Truth was sufficiently confirmed otherwise. Who the numerous Jugglers were in these Ages, who were guilty of these Pretences, this Gentleman has not told us, nor can he tell us. This too is all Supposition, unsupported by Evidence, tho' so confidently and frequently repeated for the sake of carrying on his Scheme.

In Page 71. I find a Word or two, which wants a little Guard. The Doctor mentions, as a "Pitch of Credulity," the Persuasion of the early Christians, that they were "exposed
" at every Step to Snares and Charms, con-
" trived by malicious Spirits, perpetually
" haunting them, and watching every un-
" guarded Moment to get Possession both
" of their Souls and Bodies." Now, so far as the primitive Christians were under any Apprehensions of the Devil's Power over their Souls; so far at least is this Power certain; so far were their Apprehensions just. It is idle to suppose, that they were afraid of his seizing their own Bodies, when even the private and, comparatively, ignorant People among them so commonly and easily cast him out of those of others. But, with regard to their *Souls*,

there always was Danger, and therefore a Necessity of Caution. It was no Credulity to believe this. This Gentleman therefore should not have thus jumbled these things together. In this respect, he must himself be as credulous as the Fathers were, if he
1 Pet. v. 8. believes St. Peter: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.* Some Snares of these malicious Spirits are here certainly spoken of, as what we are perpetually exposed to. They are watching every unguarded Moment to get Possession of our Souls.

C H A P. VII.

The several Miracles considered.

WE are now to attend this Gentleman in taking a Review of the several Miracles said to have been done in the primitive Church; at least as far as such a Review can administer any fresh Evidence, or let any new Light in upon the Subject.

SECT. I. *Of Raising the Dead.*

AND, first, for that of *raising the Dead.* The Account of this we have from *Ireneus* in very explicit Terms. This Gentleman

owns

owns it to be "the principal indeed of all
"Miracles." Here could be no Imposition,
no Juggling. Pretences of Superstition, or of
Credulity, could have no place. The weak-
est Person, who could only tell when a Man
is dead, and alive again, is a good Judge and
Witness of this Fact. Nor can any Chri-
stian say, that it is in itself incredible. When
therefore a Writer, who has no-way forfeited
his Credit, relates, that this Miracle *was fre-*
quently done in the Church on necessary Occa-
sions, and that Men so raised had lived many
Years afterwards among them; would not any
one expect some positive and strong Proof, be-
fore he hastily rejects such Testimony? Will
mere Suppositions be allowed to overturn or
shake it?—And what has this Gentleman here
given us better? No Instance of this, it is plead-
ed, is to be found in the Three First Centuries;
i. e. I suppose, the Names of the Persons so
raised are not mentioned. But what can this
Omission avail?—*Eusebius* cites *Papias* as
saying, that this Miracle had been done in his
Time. Neither can I discern the least Ap-
pearance of Doubt or Distrust in the Histo-
rian, tho' this Gentleman is pleased to say,
that "he seems to rank *it* amongst the other
"fabulous Stories delivered by that weak
"Man." And, however weak *Papias* was,
he may be a good Witness of such a Fact.
No Wisdom was here required.

"If a Miracle of so surprising a Nature
"had

“ had been so frequent,—or performed, as it
 “ were, in every Parish or Place where there
 “ was a Christian Church, it must have made
 “ great Noise in the World, and been cele-
 “ brated—by all the Historians of those
 “ Times.” But, 1st, Does *Irenæus* indeed
 say, that this Miracle was *performed in every*
Place where there was a Christian Church?
 Far from it. He says, it had been performed
often; but sure this does not imply so much.
 He says also, that it was usually done at the
 joint Supplication *της καλα τοπον εκκλησιαις*.
 But neither will these Words require such
 an Interpretation: They mean no more than
 the *Christians of the respective Places where*
such Wonders were done. And thus *Valesius*
 renders the Words: *Tota simul unius loci Ec-*
clesia, &c. And by *what* Historians would
 this Gentleman have had these Miracles ce-
 lebrated? By *Jewish* or *Heathen* ones? This
 was not to be expected. Could they have
 disproved such Accounts, no doubt but they
 would have been glad to do it; and we may
 depend upon it, this had been done. But
 to have celebrated them, was what they
 were very little inclined to, if indeed they
 gave themselves any Trouble to examine
 them; which this Gentleman will bear me
 out, if we should question. However, if
 the Silence of the Enemies of the Truth be
 admitted to overthrow any Miracles wrought
 in Support of it; where will this end? What

Christian

Ap. Euseb.
 H. E. l. v.
 c. 7.

Christian Historians then of those Times have we to depend upon? The earliest and best we have remaining is *Eusebius*, who has preserved to us this very Passage of *Irenæus* in its original *Greek*; and hereby not only evinced the Genuineness of it beyond all Doubt, but also borne a most ample Attestation to the Fact; much stronger than he possibly could, had he ever so often recorded it in his own Words. But perhaps this Gentleman desires, that so important a Miracle should have been recorded by the subsequent Fathers. Of all Men he has the least Right to desire this. Were it so, he might say in this Case, as he has in others, that these copied after *Irenæus*.

“ But it was so far from being commonly
“ ~~and~~ openly effected, as every Miracle
“ should necessarily be, which is wrought
“ for the Conversion of Infidels, that all the
“ Enemies of the Gospel, as *Irenæus* himself
“ confesses, constantly affirmed the thing
“ itself to be impossible.” This Gentleman
seems to think, that a Miracle’s being *commonly* effected, and *openly* effected, is the same thing. But there is a great Difference between them. And to confound or jumble these Ideas together will necessarily perplex and mislead us. We may observe, in the next place, that this Miracle differs from others in one thing; that there is no Occasion for its being *openly* done. Infidels, who
never

never had an Opportunity of seeing it, yet, if they have sufficient Evidence of it, ought in Reason and Conscience to believe it. And sufficient Evidence of its Reality may easily be had, even tho' no one Witness was present at the working it.—*Irenæus* says, that the antient *Heretics* were so far from raising the Dead, that they affirmed the thing to be impossible. But what does this prove? Not the Falshood of the Fact, but the Power of Prejudice; not any Fraud or Collusion in others, but a Spirit of Obstinacy and Unbelief in themselves. If their Notions of the Impossibility of this Miracle must set aside the Evidences of it, Christianity will, I fear, come very poorly off.—But possibly they might not have once seen this worked. God might not grant such strong Conviction to the *Heretics*, who had before despised such Means as were abundantly sufficient to have convinced them, but reserve it for the Satisfaction of Persons of humbler and better Dispositions among the *Heathens*. I cannot affirm this to have been the Case: But neither can this Gentleman affirm the contrary. The Supposition is probable; and that is sufficient for the present Purpose.

P. 73.

“ When *Autolycus*, an eminent *Heathen*,
 “ challenged his Friend *Theophilus* Bishop of
 “ *Antioch*—to shew him but one Person who
 “ had been raised from the Dead, on the
 “ Condition of turning Christian himself
 “ upon

“ upon it; *Theophilus* discovers, by his Answer, that he was not able to give him “ that Satisfaction.” And Mr. *Dodwell* is cited, as thinking this a Proof, not only that this Miracle had ceased then, or, at least, that it was no longer common, but that those, who had been raised, had in the Space of Forty Years been dead again: Which Suppositions answer the Difficulty: And neither of them has this Gentleman attempted to disprove. However, it must be owned, that the Demand of *Autolycus* was unreasonable*: There were other very sufficient Arguments to have satisfied him of the Truth of Christianity. And even on the Supposition, that some Instances of Persons raised again had been then alive, it by no means follows, that *Theophilus* must have known them, or been able to point them out. To suppose such to have been common in every Church, is, as was observed before, a Mistake, grounded on a false Construction of *Irenæus*’s Words. Upon

* Most especially if the Case be, as Mr. *Dodwell*’s Son has endeavoured to shew, that *Autolycus*’s Demand was to see one raised from the Dead in his Sight, and not one who had been raised before, which would have been little or no Satisfaction to him. By this way of considering the Passage, the Foundation of the Objection is removed. See *Free Answer*, p. 82, &c.—We may add on this Head, that, when St. Paul asked, *Why should it be thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the Dead?* *Acts* xxvi. 8. we do not read, that he then raised any dead Person to convince those who thought so. Yet Dr. *Middleton* will not say, that this miraculous Power subsisted not in those Days.

the

the Whole therefore, tho' *Theophilus* did not produce any Instance of this Miracle, to gratify the vain Humour, and idle Curiosity, of his Antagonist; this cannot set aside the positive and express Testimony of *Irenæus*.

P. 74.

This Gentleman thinks it utterly incredible, “ that a Power, of all others the most affecting and reputable to the Church, should be withdrawn at a time, when its Adversaries were defying them to shew any Effects of it, and putting the Merits of the Controversy upon that very Issue.” This Difficulty affects only Mr. *Dodwell* the Father, and such as think it was withdrawn so soon. For my own part, I cannot determine any thing about it. How long God was pleased to continue this Power in the Church after *Irenæus* wrote, I know not. But surely our Ignorance of this will not amount to a Presumption, that there never was such a Power when he wrote. Our Ignorance of the precise Time when any Miracle ceased, does not carry so much as the Appearance of an Argument, that the Relations of it are fabulous.—In short, these are Matters, which belong to God. His it is to grant, to suspend, to withdraw His miraculous Gifts, when he pleases. Supposing this particular Miracle soon withdrawn, there was Evidence enough left to convince the Adversaries of Christianity. And tho' it is but too usual with these Persons to neglect such Evidence

as is before them, and to be calling out for what they please to think stronger; yet they have but little Reason to hope to be gratified.

—This Gentleman's Reasoning here seems to go upon the Supposition, that God will continue any Miracle, as long as the Enemies of the Truth defy those who defend it to shew some Instance of it. But he must give me Leave to remind him of his own Rule, which he seems here to forget, "how rash Pref.p.22.
"and presumptuous it is, to form Arguments so peremptorily upon the supposed
"Necessity or Propriety of a Divine Interposition," and, let me add, of the Continuance of any single Miracle in any particular Times and Exigencies, "in this or
"that particular Case; and to decide upon
"the Views and Motives of The Deity, by
"the narrow Conceptions of human Reason."

From what has been said, it appears, and from what will farther be said, it will more fully appear, that the Distinction, which learned Protestants make between the Primitive and Popish Miracles, is not so vain as this Gentleman asserts; since he has not proved, nor will ever be able to prove, that the first were not generally wrought "for
"the sake, and in the midst, of Unbelievers?" Which neither was, nor is, the Case of the latter.

SECT. 2. *Of Healing the Sick.*

THE next Miracle we are to examine, is that of *Healing the Sick*. A Miracle most probable *in itself*, as well as the preceding one, because practised by *Christ*, and His Apostles, as this Gentleman must acknowledge; and therefore to be believed, if well attested. That the primitive Fathers bear clear and undoubted Testimony to it, as wrought in their Days, this Gentleman cannot doubt. He therefore can have nothing to do, but to offer such Objections against their Testimony, as will effectually invalidate it. But indeed we have nothing offered of this Nature; nothing, but what might have been offered, supposing the Cures to have been miraculous; nothing, but what may be offered against any Cures of this Kind whatever. We will however see what has been said. And when the Evidence is so very slender, it would be Cruelty to dissemble, or to rob it of any of its Force. Such as it is, therefore, I must lay it before the Reader. 1. We are told, “Some
 P. 75. “ affirm that it was done by the Imposition
 “ of Hands; some by invoking the Name
 “ of God, and of Jesus, and reciting some
 “ Story of His Life; and others by the Use
 “ of Oil” consecrated, — Such Differences as these (for there is no sort of Inconsistency in the Accounts) cannot, I imagine, be
 im-

improved into Objections. And we find St. James mentioning Two of them together ; *Anointing them with Oil in the Name of the Lord.* 2. We are afterwards informed of the natural Power of Oil to cure Wounds. But this does not reach the Case of Distempers, nor of other Cures said to have been worked, where the Use of Oil is not mentioned. And there is great Difference between the gradual natural Efficacy of Oil, and a miraculous Power attending the Use of it. The former could never have been mistaken for the latter, or represented as such. 3. But the Pretence of this miraculous Power “ was “ so successfully maintained in the Heathen “ World by Fraud and Craft, that when it “ came to be challenged by the Christians, it “ was not capable of exciting any Attention “ to it among those, who themselves pretended to the same Power.” Whether any Consequence was intended to be drawn from hence, I know not. Sure I am, no one can justly be drawn to overthrow the Pretences of the Christians. Neither can this Author prove, nor indeed is it probable, that the Heathens gave no Attention to them. The numerous Conversions among these rather evince the contrary. 4. But the Christians could neither deny nor detect these Powers claimed by the Heathens. How far they allowed them, may be seen from what has been said above. They did not deny,
O that

that some Wonders, Prodigies, and magical Operations, had been performed. But “ they “ insisted always, that it was performed by “ *Demons* or evil Spirits.” And had they no Reason for insisting on this? And if they had, was not this *sufficiently detecting* them? *Athenagoras* is here cited as saying, that “ extraordinary Works were performed in “ the Name of Idols; from which some “ have received Benefit, others Harm.” Which sure was enough to point out the Authors of them, and to distinguish them from those of the Christians. What *Origen* is cited for, I cannot tell; unless it be to shew, “ that the Cure of Diseases, and the “ Prediction of Events, are things of an “ indifferent Nature, and which belong to “ bad as well as good Beings.” However, it is plain from the very Turn of the Sentence, that *Origen* is here arguing *hypothetically*, and *ad homines*. If I should grant, says he, that *Æsculapius* cures Diseases, &c. And besides, should he have allowed the Reality of some Cures ascribed to *Æsculapius*, yet he might have very sufficient Ways of distinguishing these from the Christian Miracles. And in this very Place he pleads, *We have ourselves seen many Persons thus cured of severe Distempers—whom neither Men nor Devils had healed*, p. 124. 5. The same Gift of miraculous Cures is said to have been pretended to have been “ possessed more “ largely,

“ largely, and exerted more openly, than
“ in the private Assemblies of the Christians.
“ For in the Temples of *Æsculapius*, all
“ Kinds of Diseases were believed to be pub-
“ licly cured, by the pretended Help of that
“ Deity: In Proof of which there were
“ erected in each Temple Columns or Tables
“ of Brass or Marble, on which a distinct
“ Narrative of each particular Cure was in-
“ scribed.” But can this Gentleman, on
this Account, put these Heathen Miracles
on a Level with those related by the Fa-
thers? Or argue, because the one were false,
therefore we have no Reason to believe the
Truth of the others? If this was not his
Design, to what End did he produce them?
But if it was, is it not easy to perceive many
Differences between them? Do *Pausanias*
and *Strabo* relate what was done in their
own Times, as the Fathers do? Did they
die Martyrs for the Truth of the Religion
thus confirmed, as many of these did? Are
Accounts of Miracles in Favour of Idolatry
as easy to be received, as those in Support
of Christianity? If Accounts of false Miracles
are admitted to set aside the true, these are
pertinently enough urged. But I must hope,
that our Author does not intend to carry his
Consequences thus far; and that he himself
will allow, that a great Distinction must ne-
cessarily be made between these Cases; and
that wise and prudent Men may reject the

Miracle of the Cures of *Æsculapius*, without being under any Necessity of distrusting the Accounts of those either of *Christ*, His Apostles, or even of the first Christians.

P. 79. How to understand the following Sentence, I am at a Loss. “ Tho’ nothing can
 “ support the Belief and Credit of Miracles
 “ more authentically, than public Monu-
 “ ments, erected in Proof and Memory of
 “ them, at the Time when they were per-
 “ formed; yet, in Defiance of that Autho-
 “ rity, it is certain, that all those Heathen
 “ Miracles were pure Forgeries contrived to
 “ delude the credulous Multitude.” That is, if I understand right, that the utmost Support of the Belief of Miracles has been, and is, common to pure Forgeries; *i. e.* that we can have no more Reason to believe any Miracles, than we have to believe pure Forgeries. I do not fix this Consequence upon the Author, who I hope never saw it. But, I own, it stares me full in the Face. And the Sentence is the more remarkable, as no Parallel between the primitive Miracles, and the Heathen Pretences, which was this Gentleman’s Argument, required any such Declaration.

It may be proper just to add, that the Sentence here cited is not a Rule particular enough to direct our Judgment; and that, besides the Particulars mentioned in it, it is necessary, that such Cures should be wrought
publicly,

publicly, and upon *such* Subjects as were known to have been really diseased, and by such Persons, as had no immediate Interest to promote or secure thereby. All which was Fact with regard to Christian Miracles; but every Part of it doubtful, if not false, as to the Heathen Wonders.

The next Sentence is of the same Kind with that last cited, and would suit much better in a Discourse against miraculous Cures in general, than in one against those related by the Fathers. " This particular Claim of curing Diseases miraculously, affords great room for such a Delusion, and a wide Field for the Exercise of Craft. Every Man's Experience has taught him, that Diseases thought fatal and desperate are oft surprisingly healed of themselves, by some secret and sudden Effort of Nature, impenetrable to the Skill of Man: But to ascribe this *presently* to a Miracle, as weak and superstitious Minds are apt to do; to the Prayers of the Living, or the Intercessions of the Dead; is what neither sound Reason nor true Religion will justify." I own, I could have wished, that the Word *always* had been here inserted instead of *presently*. For at present, if this Sentence proves any thing, it proves too much, and is equally levelled, I do not say designedly, against these Miracles of *Christ* and His Apostles, as those of the Fathers.

However, I can by no means agree with this Gentleman, in thinking it difficult to distinguish in this Case between Nature and Miracle, or in supposing, that this Cure affords any great Room for Delusion. Diseases may sometimes unexpectedly stop, tho' 'tis very seldom indeed, that any of long Continuance have been known to cease *instantaneously*, much less in the very Instant that any Person shall command or pray that it may. And yet no Person of common Sense and Judgment, acquainted with the Party both before and after his Cure, as well as with the Circumstances of it, can once hesitate, whether it was natural or miraculous. That the Fathers, who related this Miracle, did not enquire into the Facts, this Gentleman has not proved. That they were either *partial* and *interested*, or *weak* and *credulous*, however here insinuated, he has not proved. And therefore, without knowing "more precisely, " in this Case, the real Bounds between Nature and Miracle, we" may and ought to " pay a Regard to such Stories."

SECT. 3. *Of the Demoniacs.*

P. 80. **W**E are now come to consider the Case of the *Demoniacs*; the Curing of whom this Author owns to be "the most eminently " celebrated of all the miraculous Powers of " the primitive Church — to this the antient

"tient Fathers and Apologists make the
"most frequent Appeals, and on this they
"lay the greatest Strefs," &c. And indeed,
if we cannot vindicate them on this Article,
their Credit must be lost for ever, and we
must be obliged to decline all farther Defence
of them. 'Tis impossible for any Words
more strongly to express a Claim to this Mi-
racle, than those used by all the best Writers
of the Second and Third Centuries. Every
Circumstance, which can support any Testi-
mony, or shew the Veracity of any Author
who bears it, concur in this Case. So that
the joint Authority of these Two Ages is
here concerned. And this Gentleman, if he
proves his Point, must prove, that all the
Fathers (for I do not remember one du-
ring this Period, who has not related these
Wonders) were successively void either of
common Sense, or common Prudence, or
common Honesty, or of all these at once.

I shall attend the *Enquirer* thro' all his
Reasonings, and have no doubt but I shall
convince every impartial Reader, how very
far they are from coming up to the Point.
This Miracle, *in itself*, cannot be said to be
incredible. Our Saviour certainly worked it.
The Relations of the Fathers differ from
those of the Evangelists on this Subject but
in one or two Circumstances, and these of
no Consequence, such as ought not to lead
us to reject the Accounts, if there be no

A Vindication of the

Flaw or Defect in the Attestations. And whether there are any such or not, it is now time to examine.

“ It is not easy to collect from their [the Fathers] Accounts, what was the real Case of these Demoniacs, and the proper Nature of their Malady. The Fathers indeed themselves seem to have been fully persuaded—that they were actually possessed and tormented by Devils and evil Spirits; yet many learned Men of modern Times have imagined them rather to have been affected by the *Epilepsy*.” Among these Mr. *Dodwell* is cited, who also supposed them to have been curable by the ordinary Way of *Medicine*, as well as by *Miracle*. And two or three Fathers are brought in, as representing only the ordinary Symptoms of an *Epilepsy*.

Were all this granted, I cannot see what Advantage this Gentleman could justly take. These Cases are as fully described as those in the Gospels. Some learned Moderns have thought these last only Cases of *Madness*, the *Falling Sickness*, &c. But they have constantly owned the Miraculousness of the Cures. In the same manner, tho’ we should suppose the Fathers mistaken in their Opinion of Possessions, still the Cures of these unhappy Persons, which they have related, must be owned to have been strictly supernatural. Whether the Diseases could have been cured by *Medicine*, is another Point. Here they

were

were not so cured. And this we may believe on the Authority of the Fathers, tho' they had entertained an erroneous Notion about the Cause of these Disorders.

However, I am very far from thinking, that their Notion was erroneous. With regard to the Scriptures, the Case of the *Demoniacs* was a few Years ago very fully canvassed among us by several learned Men, *quorum pars minima fui*. And the Gentleman, who laboured to reduce these to common and ordinary Maladies, and to exclude all Operations of evil Spirits, I will venture to say, failed of proving his Point, and was abundantly confuted.—As to these Miracles recorded by the Fathers, the Case is, if possible, still plainer. It cannot be pretended, that the Fathers did not believe the Power of evil Spirits concerned in these Afflictions and Torments. The *Enquirer* acknowledges they did. And what Reason is there to think they were mistaken? By the *Demons* they understood no other than *Devils*. They might well believe, that it was agreeable to the Disposition and Inclination of these cursed Spirits to do all the Mischief they could. There was no Difficulty in supposing, that they had natural Power to injure Men, and that they might, on some Occasions, be permitted to do so. According to the Accounts of the primitive Writers, they frequently did so, openly, and in such manner, that it
is

is not to be thought, that any one, who would take a very little Trouble to examine them, could be imposed upon or deceived hereby.

But, it is intimated, the Cases are plainly *epileptic*.—So are some of them recorded by the Evangelists. But neither the one nor the other are *common* Epilepsies, but Epilepsies, or Disorders of a similar Nature, occasioned by evil Spirits (and such * Mr. *Dodwell* thought them), and cured at once by putting a Stop to their Power, and casting them out.

P. 82.

To go on with this Gentleman's Objections:
 “ As to what these Fathers declare concern-
 “ ing their Power of *lashing*, *burning*, and
 “ *tormenting* the Devils ; and of their *groan-*
 “ *ing* and *howling* under the Torture of the
 “ Christian Exorcism ; such an Imagination
 “ might easily be conceived, from the strange
 “ Convulsions of the Body, and the hollow
 “ Sighs and Groans, which commonly attend
 “ such Fits.” The Expressions of *lashing* and
burning are certainly metaphorical ; and it
 would be ridiculous to understand them
 otherwise. The others, of their being *tor-*
mented, and *groaning*, or *crying out*, are
 mentioned in the Gospels. And how these

* This the *Enquirer* could not but know ; tho', by leaving the following Words out of his Citation, he endeavoured to keep it from the Knowledge of his Readers. “ Et satis est ad
 “ *Hippocratem* refellendum ipsa illa curatio, quod solerent
 “ ita affecti, ejecto *Dæmone*, convalescere.” *Dissert. in lxx.*
 11. §. 47.

could

could be attributed to the Cause here mentioned, is past my Imagination. Had it been only *inarticulate Sounds*, which came from these wretched People, this might have been said with much better Colour. But we must remember the Speeches and Confessions of the Devils, their answering Questions, and pleading for Favour and Ease. Could Imagination suggest all these from mere Convulsions, and hollow Groans? This the *Enquirer* will not say.

How then shall we account for them? He tells us, "either by the disordered State
" of the Patient, answering wildly and at
" random to any Questions proposed, or by
" the Arts of Imposture and Contrivance
" between the Parties concerned in the Act."
The Relations of the Evangelists include all these Particulars of the evil Spirits *speaking, confessing, pleading, &c.* The Difficulty lies against their Accounts, as well as those of the Fathers. If the Methods here used to account for it are evidently false and unserviceable in the one Case, they cannot be depended upon in the other. This Gentleman, I hope, abhors the Thought of charging *Christ*, and His *Apostles*, with any such Arts of Imposture and Contrivance. And it is very unjust, without good Grounds, to represent the early *Apologists* and *Martyrs*, or even Christians in general, then, with being guilty of these; or so much as rashly to suspect them

them to have been capable of such. — Neither will the other way of solving the Difficulty be sufficient. The disordered State of the Patient will by no means account for many Speeches and Actions, which are related of such Persons. Experience, on which this Gentleman builds so much, will shew us nothing like it. It is in the very highest Degree improbable, that so many *epileptic* Persons, who generally are incapable of understanding or answering at all, should, thro' the Wildness of their Disease, answer consistently, and uniformly, and agreeably to each other. This has been undeniably shewn by a particular View of the Circumstances of the Gospel-Relations; and it might as easily be shewn of the others. But these bear so near a Resemblance to them, that we need not enter on a distinct Examination: And a Vindication of the one is, in this respect, a Vindication of both.

These Suppositions then both fail this Writer. And when any one is unwilling to rest in the Belief of plain Facts, it is not difficult to invent Suppositions, and to propose them to the Reader, how contrary soever they may be, not only to the Truth, but to each other.

An Instance of this I have here before me. For we are next told of “the credulous and
“enthusiastic Disposition of these Fathers,
“and their pre-conceived and erroneous No-

“tions

" tions about the Origin and Power of Demons ;" from whence every impartial Reader " will be apt to conclude, that they " were either induced by their Prejudices, " to give too hasty a Credit to these pretended Possessions ; or carried away by " their Zeal, to assist even in supporting a " Delusion, which was useful to the Christian Cause." *Both* these Accounts cannot well be admitted. The Charges are opposite to each other. And *which* this Gentleman relies most upon, we are left to guess. But really *neither* of them can, without a great want of Candour, be credited. As to the former, it does not appear, that these Fathers were so extremely credulous and enthusiastic. However mistaken they might have been in some Matters of Opinion, yet they certainly were competent Judges and Witnesses of plain Matters of Fact. Their Notions about the *Origin* of Demons might be very erroneous. But their Notions of their *Power* were very just and right. These two Points, tho' here artificially blended together, are as distinct and different as possible. It is hardly possible to suppose, that the Credit they gave to these Cases of Possession, which they had so many Opportunities of beholding and examining, was hasty and unreasonable.

But the other Accusation hurts their Character still more. It is levelled, not only against

against their intellectual, but against their moral Characters. The primitive Apologists and Martyrs, who have been for so many Ages respected and esteemed as Men of great Piety, Integrity, and Virtue, by the Learned of all Communions, are at last, it seems, found guilty of being so many false and designing Knaves; at least, with concurring and acting with Persons of this Character. And indeed, if the Cases of the *Demoniacs* were Delusions, these eminent Writers must have been concerned, and very deeply too, in supporting, nay, in contriving them. But sure it is strange, that they should never have been suspected of this before; that Men, who are sometimes represented as extremely weak, should have been able, so long, and so successfully, to delude the World; that they could ever obtain any Credit in asserting things in Defiance of the Senses of Mankind. — Besides, if the Cases now under Consideration were only Delusions, how could they have been at all useful to the Christian Cause? Rather, how could they be otherwise than prejudicial to it? Was there not One Person, in all the Second and Third Centuries, among Friends and Enemies, able and willing to detect the Cheat? And could any thing have hurt their Religion more, than such a Detection? Or would the succeeding Fathers have gone on to lay a Stress on a Fact, which had been before discovered to be a mere imposture?

posture? This would not have been Zeal only, but the Height of Folly and Madness itself. And if such Discovery had been made, should we not have heard of it? Would not the Adversaries of Christianity have triumphed in it? Could the Friends and Defenders of it, who are owned to have appealed to these Cases as most convincing, and who invite and call upon the Heathen Powers to examine the Truth of them, have stood their Ground, or maintained any Character in the World?

Here it is worthy of our Observation, that whatever strong Pretences the *Roman Catholics* make to Miracles abroad, yet in Protestant Countries their Priests are wiser than to attempt to exorcize Devils, or perform any other such Wonders. And would they not expose themselves, if they attempted it? And why should not the primitive Christians have had the same Fears, or the same bad Success, if they had been Impostors?

Thus improbable in every respect is this Supposition. Well may this Gentleman apprehend, that it "may sound harsh in the P. 83.
"Ears of many." It certainly must be condemned by all, who are not inclined to believe every injurious Censure, which may be thrown out at random. For it is not easy to conceive one more absolutely groundless.

But "the greatest Zealots in Religion, or the Leaders of Sects and Parties, what-

"ever

“ever Purity or Principles they pretend to,
 “have seldom scrupled to make use of a
 “commodious Lie, for the Advancement
 “of what they call the Truth.” Unless
 this Gentleman will lay down this as an
 universal Rule, which, I dare say, he will
 not do, it will avail nothing against the Cre-
 dit of any particular Persons, which is other-
 wise well supported. And surely the Pre-
 sumption lies strongly in favour of the Vera-
 city and Authority of those, who had Cou-
 rage enough to die Martyrs for the Truth,
 had we no other Consideration whatever to
 induce us to depend upon their Integrity.

But the Fathers are said by *Le Clerc* to
 “have used the *hyperbolical Style* to advance
 “the Honour of God.” — But is not this
 very different from knowingly relating false
 Facts? Did *Le Clerc* accuse them of doing
 this? Or, if he did, will his Authority prove
 them guilty, any more than the *Enquirer’s*
 own? Sure there must be a great Defect of
 material Arguments, when such exceedingly
 slight things are insisted upon.

“The greatest Part of the wonderful
 “things, which they relate, are in them-
 “selves utterly incredible; and such of them
 “as happen to be the most distinctly de-
 “scribed, carry always the greatest Marks
 “of Art and Contrivance” — The Miracle
 we are considering, is that of the *Dispossession*.
 There is nothing incredible in them.

They

They are described distinctly enough, and appear real. The Instances this Gentleman produces do not reach the Point. They both rest on the single Authority of *Tertullian*: Whereas, for the Demoniacs, we have the unanimous Attestations of *all* the Fathers of the Second and Third Centuries. *Tertullian* does not say, that he was himself an Eye-witness of these Instances, which also happened only once: They all relate these Cases as occurring frequently, and therefore as what they must have known themselves. Suppose therefore he was mistaken in those Two Points; nay, suppose he had invented the Stories himself to serve a present Occasion; which is more than can be proved; will it therefore follow, without other Proof, that they all were thus guilty; or that other Facts, which he attests in common with them all, must of course be of the same Nature?

However, perhaps, on reconsidering the Instances, we may not find Reason to condemn *Tertullian*. The First is his noted Story of the Woman's being possessed in the Theatre by a Devil, who alleged in his Vindication, that he had found her *on his own Ground*. The Second relates to a Vision, which another saw of her Winding-sheet the Night after she had seen a Tragedy, in which she was reproached with the Tragedian; and did not live above Five Days after. As to the last, we are not concerned to enquire into
P it.

it. 'Tis evident, that *Tertullian* could have it only from Hearsay. It cannot therefore be at all parallel to the Cases of the *Demoniacs*. And which way soever we account for it, it cannot destroy the Father's Veracity.—The former Instance is of a more open Nature, and related as a certain Fact: But 'tis no-way clear, that he invented it. It is a possible and a favourable Construction, which ought to take place where it can, that he *might be* deceived herein by some Person, whom he trusted: Not that we are at all obliged to grant, that he *was* deceived. The Heathen Theatres were full of all manner of Idolatry, Lewdness, Cruelty, &c. It was neither safe nor decent for a Christian to appear in them. *Tertullian* had Reason to represent them as the Temples of Devils, set apart for the Promotion of their Service and Worship. At a time therefore, when we have Reason to believe, that God permitted them to torment the Bodies of Men, and that He gave the Christians Power to cast them out, and that they used to speak openly at this Juncture; what should hinder us from believing, that they might give the Answer before us, on that particular Occasion? If it be thought Superstition, or Credulity, to see Things in this Light, I cannot help that. However, till the Story is well disproved, and the Falshood of it fully shewn; and till it can also be made out, that the Relater con-

trived it from his own Brain; his Veracity will remain safe and unshaken.

This Gentleman thinks it "very remarkable, that all the Fathers, who lay so great a Stress on this particular Gift of casting out Devils, yet allow the same Power both to the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, as well before as after our Saviour's Coming:" And he quotes, in Support of this, *Justin Martyr*, *Irenæus*, *Origen*, and *Josephus*: The last of whom appears to have nothing to do here; nor need we be at all concerned with the ridiculous Account he gives. *Origen* mentions Exorcisms as effectual among the Heathens, if used in some original *Hebrew* Names, which, if translated, would be unavailing. But it is remarkable, that he says in the Conclusion *, *as say the Skilful in these Matters*. So that this may be only an Argument *ad hominem*: Nor are we sure, that he here speaks his own Sentiments; however, he plainly doth not speak of his own Knowledge. I allow, however, that both he, and the other Fathers here cited, own, that the Name of the God of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, was used, and sometimes with Success, by the *Jewish* and *Gentile* Exorcists. But nothing will follow from this Concession to the Disadvantage of my Argument. Might not God Almighty sometimes give a sur-

P. 84.

* Ως παρ' αὐτοῖς καὶ ταῦτα δεινὰ. G. Cels. p. 262.

prising Attestation to the Name, by which He then chose to be called, and by which He was distinguished from the Idols of the World?

Vid. Grot.
& Ham. in
Matth. xii.
27.

Learned Men are of Opinion, that we ought to distinguish between the several Exorcists of those Times; that, even among the *Jews*, some were much more serious, and favoured, and to be regarded, than others; and not to be ranked with the vagabond Exorcists and Magicians, who, besides the Name of God, used many Heathen Arts and Charms to this Purpose. But neither will this put them on a Level with the Dispossessions wrought by *Christ*, and His Followers; which were not only more numerous, more signal and open, but more certain and effectual, than the others. Thus

Apol. i.

Justin Martyr tells the *Roman Senate*, that
“all over the World, and in your own City,
“many Christians, adjuring them by the
“Name of *Jesus Christ*—have healed, and
“even now heal, many Demoniacs, whom
“no Exorcists, Inchanters, and Magicians,
“have healed.” This shews a manifest and sufficient Difference between these Cases. The Reality of the Christian Miracles cannot therefore suffer, tho’ we allow some of a similar Kind to have been pretended to, and even sometimes worked, by the *Jews* or Heathens. We cannot doubt which were superior.

P. 86.
Note.

This Gentleman thinks it follows, from what the Fathers have said, “that the Power
“of casting out Devils was considered as a
“peculiar

“ peculiar Gift, or Art rather, grounded on
 “ certain Rules, which were taught and de-
 “ livered in Books; and was common both
 “ to the *Jews* and Heathens, as well as Chri-
 “ stians; and among them all was admini-
 “ stred by a particular Set of Men called
 “ *Exorcists*: Who, about the Time of Ori-
 “ gen’s Death, or the Middle of the Third
 “ Century, began to be reckoned among
 “ the inferior Orders of the Church.” Now,
 that the Heathen Exorcists are said to have
 relied on some Rules and Charms for this
 Purpose, is true. Many of the *Jews* are also
 charged with having recourse to the same, in
 Imitation of them. But this is not asserted
 of all the *Jews*: And much less can it be
 asserted of any of the early Christians, who
 used only the Name of their Lord, and the
 Sign of His Passion, on this Occasion. And
 for the greatest Part of the Three First Cen-
 turies this supernatural “ Gift was common
 “ to all Christians, and in a more especial
 “ manner conferred upon the Bishops and
 “ Presbyters of the Church; who, when
 “ there was any Occasion to use any Exor-
 “ cism in the Church, were the ordinary
 “ Ministers of it.” This we learn from B. iii. c. 4.
 Mr. Bingham, in the Chapter to which the
Enquirer here refers us: Which very learned
 and faithful Collector of Ecclesiastical Anti-
 quities also tells us, that the *Order of Exor-*
cists was constituted “ in the latter End of the

“ Third Century ;” and he assents to *Bona's* Opinion, “ that it came in * upon the withdrawing of that extraordinary and miraculous Power ; which probably was by degrees, and not at the same time in all Places.” And when they were settled, he also tells us what their Care and Business chiefly was ; which had nothing miraculous in it, and which differed *toto cælo* from the Employments of the Heathen Exorcists.

This being the true State of the Facts, how could this Gentleman so industriously confound these things together ; thereby suggesting to the unwary Reader, or at least leaving him to imagine, that no more Credit is to be given to the Christian Accounts, than to those of the Heathens ; and that the Exorcists among both only carried on the same Art or Trade ?

- P. 87. “ It will be granted, I suppose, by all Men of Sense, that these *Jewish* and *Gen- tile* Exorcists were mere Knaves and Impostors.” *Grotius* and *Dr. Hammond*, whose Sense cannot be doubted, did not think so hardly of *all* of this Character among the *Jews*. — “ *Ulpian* the Lawyer speaks of Exorcism in general, as a Term of Art used by Impostors ; by whom he is supposed by some to mean the *Jewish*, by others, the *Christian Exorcists*.” But what Wonder, if an Heathen, who, as *Lac-*

* So thought *Dr. Cave*, *Primitive Christianity*, p. 150.
tantius

tantius says *, published a Collection of penal Laws against the Christians, should misrepresent and abuse them?—" If the Fathers were so far deluded by those *Jewish* and *Gentile* Pretenders, as to take such senseless Charms, and Tricks of Legerdemain, for the Effects of a supernatural Power, their Prejudices would operate much more strongly in favour of their own Impostors, who had taken up the same Trade." *What Impostors?* It remains still to be proved, that there were any such among the Christians. If there was any Imposture here, the Fathers themselves were the Impostors, as most probably they enjoyed, most certainly related, the Power now disputed. So that the Argument here is; Because the Fathers ascribed some magical Operations to the Assistance of the Devils; a Notion, which it is much easier to deride than disprove; therefore they were imposed upon, when they saw these frequently cast out; nay, when they cast them out themselves.—" If they saw thro' the Cheat of the Gentile Practitioners, yet, on account of the Credit, which they had gained with the People, and the Difficulty of detecting the Fraud, they might think it convenient,

* Domitius (a), de officio Praefectus, libro 7^{mo} rescripta principum nefaria collegit; ut doceret, quibus poenis affici oporteret eos, qui se cultores Dei confiterentur. L. 5. §. 11.

(a) *Ulpianus*.

“ perhaps, to oppose one Cheat to another.” What has been already said in Vindication of their Characters, is sufficient and applicable here. We should not, without good Proof, think them inclined to concur in such a Cheat: Their Cause certainly needed it not: Nay, it could not but have been hurt extremely by it.

“ It is very hard to believe what *Origen* declares above, that the Devils, for the sake of doing the greater Mischief to Men, used to possess and destroy their Cattle.” What this Gentleman thinks of the Relation in the Gospels, of the Devils *entering into the Swine, and drowning them in the Sea*, I cannot tell. I am sure, it is much easier to believe the literal Interpretation of this Miracle, than any other I have ever seen given of it. And if we may credit this, there can be nothing incredible in any other similar Cases, provided they are properly attested.

P. 90. Hitherto, I trust, the *Enquirer* has produced no sufficient Arguments to disprove the Relations of the Fathers about casting out Devils. Let us now attend to the Observations, by which he thinks “ proper to strengthen what he has been already declaring upon” this Gift.

P. 91. “ 1. There is such an Uniformity in all the primitive Accounts, tho’ given by different Fathers, and in different Ages,
“ of

“ of the Devils being scourged — that
 “ they all seem to have been cast in the
 “ same Mould ; and to have been the Copies
 “ rather of one original Story, — than the
 “ natural Descriptions of what each of them
 “ had severally seen.” I have already endeavoured to shew the Unreasonableness of this Supposition. And he, that can believe so many Facts, related thro’ Three Centuries by so many Persons, to be only Copies of One single Story, must be more credulous, than this Gentleman represents even the Fathers to be. And, I believe, this is the first time, when an Uniformity of Accounts was offered by way of Disproof of them. If the Cases and Facts were alike, how could the Representations of them be otherwise than alike ? Where Men relate the same sort of Occurrences, and write in the same Languages, and with the same Designs ; there must and will be a remarkable Similitude and Coincidence of Expression. The joint Authority and Credibility of the Fathers on this Point is therefore much strengthened, rather than weakened. And it is easy to conceive, that had they told these Stories with very different, not to say opposite, Circumstances ; we had heard a louder Clamour against them ; and they, who read them with a View to censure, and find fault, would have eagerly caught at every Incongruity of
 this

this kind, and studied to render their Testimony suspected on account of them.

“ 2. The Persons thus possessed, and in whom the Devil used to hold Discourses, were called, by the primitive Christians, *Εγγαστριμυθαι*, or *Ventriloquists*, because they were believed to *speak out of the Belly thro’ the Navel.*” The only Proof we have of this is from a spurious Book ascribed to *Justin Martyr*, but allowed to be a Work of the Fifth Century ; which the Reader should have been apprized of. The Sentence would be clearer, if translated more fully——“ How comes it to pass, that Demons still speak by those who are called *Ventriloquists*? And how comes it to pass, that they do not make Christianity odious and contemptible, by shewing forth the Works of Imposture?”——The original Words of this last Part are, *πως δε εν ευτελη και καλαφροντησεως αξιοον τον Χριστιανισμον παριστωσιν, οταν, κ. τ. λ.* And the Answer to this Question asserts, contrary to the Doctor’s Suppositions, that Christians were not liable to such Deceits of *Demons*; nay, farther, that the Oracles the *Engastrimutboi* uttered, and the Magic they performed in the Bodies of Christians, were false Appearances of Phantoms, and not Realities. See Qu. 81. However, can this Gentleman think this a sufficient Proof, that all the *Demoniacs* were *Εγγαστριμυθαι*? Were the *Epileptics* such? Does

Does the Writer here cited assert this? Or does any antient Writer whatever assert it? And will any thing less serve his Cause? The *Demons* are hence said to speak by the *Ventriloquists*, but not by these only. This Art appears plainly to relate to Prophecy or Divination. Mr. *Bingham*, in the Place referred to, confines the Term to the Devil's Prophets. The Generality of the Possessions mentioned in Antiquity had no relation to Prophecy or Divination at all, and were of a quite different Kind. And these may still stand their Ground, tho' the others can be shewn to be absolute Cheats. I may therefore pass over the greatest Part of the next Page, wherein this Gentleman supposes, that the antient Artists were like some modern ones, who have been capable of a surprising way of managing their Voices, and directing them so, that they seemed to come from any other Quarter. I own myself to be persuaded, that the *Εγγαστριμυδοι* of old are mentioned too frequently, and in too great Numbers, to allow us to suppose them to be of the latter sort; very few of which we have ever known. But be this as it will, the Possessions related by the Fathers were nothing like any such Tricks. And therefore this Gentleman's Imagination, " what strange and surprising Feats might be performed by a Correspondence between the *Ventriloquist* and the *Exorcist*, so as to delude the most sensible

P. 92.

“ sensible and sagacious of their Audience,” can here have no Place; and shews a Readiness to invent and believe any Suppositions whatever, rather than to rest satisfied with the Account given us. If we suppose any previous Concert or Correspondence between the Person curing, and the Person cured; there is no Occasion of supposing a *Ventri-loquist* concerned; as any other artful Persons could personate the *Demoniacs*; none of the Accounts of these mentioning the Voice being thrown to any Distance. But all such Correspondence, as has been observed over and over, is pure Fiction.

“ 3. Many of their *Demoniacs* could not
 “ possibly be cured by all the Power of the
 “ *Exorcists*; and the Cures, which are pretended to have been wrought on any, were
 “ but temporary, and appear to have been
 “ the Cessation rather of a particular Fit, or
 “ Access of the Distemper, than the real
 “ Expulsion of a *Demon*.” The Reasons given of this are, because they were not usually admitted to Baptism, the Communion, or Orders, during their Possessions, *i.e.* before they were cured. For, after they were cured, they were adjudged capable of all. And some were cured in the Administration of the Sacraments. This Mr. Bingham*,

* All the Canons mentioned by Mr. Bingham, and referred to by Dr. Middleton, p. 93. about receiving *Demoniacs* to Baptism and the Communion, were made after the Third Century.

whom

whom this Gentleman again refers us to, relates: And he relates, from St. Cyprian, the Reason why, in some Cases, the Disorder returned; because of their Relapses into Sin; whereas those, who after Baptism advanced in Goodness and Religion, are represented as wholly free from it. “Hoc denique et rebus ipsis experimur, ut—baptizati—careant immundo spiritu, quo antea movebantur; et laudabiles ac probabiles in Ecclesia vivant, plusque per dies singulos in augmentum cœlestis gratiæ per fidei incrementa proficiant. Et contra, sæpe nonnulli—si postmodum peccare cœperint, spiritu immundo redeunte quatiuntur; ut manifestum sit, diabolus in baptismo fidei credentis excludi; si fides postmodum defecerit, regredi.” *We have actual Experience of this, that they who are baptized in Sickness are free from any unclean Spirit, which before they were possessed with, and live in a laudable manner, approved of, in the Church; and make daily more and more Proficiency towards an Increase of the heavenly Grace, by means of a continual Increase of Faith. And, on the other hand, it often happens, that some of those, who have been baptized in their Health, if afterwards they fall into Sin, are seized with an unclean Spirit returning into them; that it may be manifest, that the Devil is in Baptism excluded by the Faith of the Believer; and returns*

Ad Magnum, Ep. 76.

A Vindication of the

turns upon an After-failure of Faith. And, I believe, there is no Proof of Possession returning after Baptism, but for the Punishment of some great Sin. Thus also, in those Instances where the Person could not be dispossessed, how easy is it to suppose a want of proper Qualifications and Dispositions; for which God was pleased not only judicially to inflict, but to *continue* for a time, this Punishment and Torment!

P. 93. And how then can we clearly, or so much as probably, collect from all this, that the Cures of the *Demoniacs* were only the Cessation of a present Fit of the Disorder? I see no Cause to suspect them on any of these Accounts. We cannot “reasonably conclude,” from any thing that has been said, “that it was nothing else, but a false Mimickry of that genuine Power, which was exercised by our Lord,” &c. As far as I can judge, it appears to be of the same Kind.

P. 94. 4thly, Stress is laid on the great Numbers of the *Demoniacs*, who resided chiefly in the Church, under the Care of the *Exorcists*. But it is plain from Mr. *Bingham's* Account here quoted, that the Time, when *Demoniacs* were committed to the *Exorcists*, in the manner here mentioned, was the very End of the Fourth Century: How could the Doctor, who must know this, artfully conceal it, under the general Term of *those early Ages*? By this time, we might suppose, without

without any Imputation on the Honesty of the Clergy, or the Exorcists, that some, both diseased and idle Persons, might apply to them to be thus maintained. And indeed, a few Years before this, there might have been some Abuses, which the Council of *Laodicea* intended to restrain, by appointing, that only Persons of Discretion, approved by the Bishop, should be set over this Matter. And if the Consequence of this was the Diminution of the Numbers of such as applied, and were taken into Care; or the setting aside the Office, at last; surely this could not have been, if the Bishops and Clergy had had any Schemes to carry on by such a Fraud. Of this more presently.

It is farther manifest from Mr. *Bingham*, that this Care of the *Exorcists*, near the Close of the Fourth Century, was *natural*; and that there was nothing miraculous in the Exercise of their Office, nor any thing more expected from them, than a *common* Blessing upon their Prayers. So that this is entirely different from that extraordinary and miraculous Power of casting out Devils; to which, according to that learned Author, this Office succeeded.—This spoils that ingenious Reflection of the *Enquirer*, that “ the Method
P. 95.
“ of relieving so miserable a Tribe of helpless Mortals will account—for the Confidence of those Challenges, made to the
“ Heathens by the Christian Apologists, to
“ come

“ come and see, at any Hour, and any
 “ Warning, how they could *torment* — and
 “ *drive the evil Spirits* out of them ; while
 “ they kept such Numbers of them in con-
 “ stant Pay, always ready for the Shew,
 “ tried and disciplined by their Exorcists, &c.
 But how can this Account be allowed ; when
 many of these Claims and Challenges were
 made before this Office of Exorcists was esta-
 blished ; when, about 250 Years before this,
Justin Martyr told the *Senate*, that these
 Miracles were done by the Christians in *Rome*
 itself ; when, about 200 Years before this,
Tertullian provokes the Heathen Powers to
 cause some Person to be brought before their
 Tribunals, *quem Dæmone agi constet*, “ whom
 “ it was certain, whom they must acknow-
 “ ledge, to have been possessed and actuated
 “ by a *Demon* ;” when the *Demoniacs*, or
 more properly the *Demons*, are represented
 in such Torments and Agonies at their Dis-
 possession, as we can hardly suppose any
 Number of Persons would submit to, for
 the sake of a bare Maintenance ?

Besides, according to the Doctor, these were
 kept for this Purpose *in* or *near* the Church ;
 and the Heathens are supposed to have been
 challenged to come to the Christian Churches
 to see them dispossessed. This must have been
 his Meaning. But surely he either forgets,
 or very falsely represents, the Condition of
 the Christians of those Times ; the Nature
 of

of which will shew, that they could not then have any such Retinue about their Churches, nor indeed had any Churches, properly speaking. *Tertullian's* Words are, "Edatur hic aliquis sub tribunalibus vestris," &c. They were the *Heathen Tribunals*, and *Judgment-Seats*, and not any supposed Christian Churches, which the Father desired for the Scene of this Miracle; and Heathens, not Christians, were to bring the Persons on whom it was to be wrought. And the *Enquirer*, I believe, would be hard put to it to produce One Instance of a Heathen Magistrate, within the Three first Centuries, invited to any Assembly of Christians to make a Trial of this Nature, or of any Christian proposing to bring him a *Demoniac* for this Purpose. — In a word, this Supposition is totally unjust and groundless, and cannot be otherwise considered, than as the sporting of a wanton and ungoverned Imagination; neither can I imagine, that this Author, on a serious Review, will pay any the least Regard or Credit to it himself.

The last Observation this Gentleman makes on this Point, is founded on Two Errors, which have been both confuted; *viz.* that the Power of casting out Devils was in the Hands only of the meaner sort of the Christian Laity, till the Year 367. and that this Power, and the Office of the Exorcists, was one and the same. — So that the Sting

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of

P. 96. of that severe Reflection is lost, that “ the
 “ licentious Abuse of this imaginary Power,
 “ by the many false and impudent Preten-
 “ sions of crafty Impostors on the one hand,
 “ and wrong-headed Enthusiasts on the other,
 “ had brought such a Scandal on Christianity
 “ itself, that the Clergy were forced at last
 “ to interpose, and take the Affair into their
 “ own Hands.” This is neither better nor
 worse than *making* History. Not one Syl-
 lable of it can be proved from any good Au-
 thority. The Truth is, that after these
 Powers, which at first were *occasionally* grant-
 ed to every Christian, and especially to the
 Clergy, were no longer common to all; and
 after the Church thought proper to appoint
 a Set of Men to take care of the *Energumens*,
 which still remained; the *Council of*
Laodicea decreed, that these Officers should
 be appointed by the *Bishop*.

This Gentleman goes on, “ that this was
 “ really the Case, is manifestly shewn by
 “ the Event; since the Exercise of this
 “ Gift was no sooner subjected to any Re-
 “ gulation, even by those, who favoured
 “ and desired to support it, than it gradually
 “ decreased and expired.” The miraculous
 Gift was *in part* withdrawn before this Re-
 gulation, which was most probably occa-
 sioned by the Decrease of it. However, it
 is hard to conceive, how such Regulation
 could naturally make it decrease; or how
 the

the Decrease or Expiration of it, when thus regulated, is any sort of Argument of the licentious Abuses before supposed. If this Gift was only a crafty subtle Pretence, and the *Clergy* desired to support it; it does not appear, that a prudent Regulation of it would at all have prejudiced it, or that they would have been under any Obligation of dropping it.

I have gone over every thing, whether of Moment or not, which Dr. *Middleton* has here urged to set aside these early Accounts of the *Demoniacs*. I have not concealed nor disguised the Force of any one of his Arguments; and, I hope, have answered them to the Satisfaction of the candid and impartial Reader. The Credit of these Authorities, and the Belief of these important Miracles, which make so principal a Figure in the Writings of the Second and Third Centuries, is then secured. And if we should rest here, and not be able to vindicate the remaining Miracles; the Negative, which the Doctor has undertaken to shew, cannot be maintained. But, when we have so good Reason to think, that these Miracles were actually worked in those Ages, as well as the others before considered; we ought to be the less surprised, if we should find another Kind of them claimed and asserted; nor can we reasonably refuse our Assent to these, if well supported, even tho' there should be a few

Difficulties attending them, which we could not clear up to Satisfaction.

SECT. 4. *Of Visions and Dreams.*

THE *Enquirer* proceeds to consider “the
“ prophetic Visions, and extatic Trances,
“ and the Discovery of Mens Hearts, ascribed
“ to the primitive Church.” Of this last,
however, he has not set down any one Instance, and very few of the others. His Objections are levelled against but Four Writers of the Three First Centuries, and chiefly against *Tertullian* and *St. Cyprian*. And the greatest Part of what is said under this Head, either no-way relates to it, or concerns only Matters of mere Opinion, and cannot affect the Veracity of these Authors.

I shall take for granted, that *supernatural Dreams and Visions* are not only possible, but have been actually vouchsafed by God in some particular Cases and Exigencies. Whoever believes the Scriptures must acknowledge this. This kind of Miracles, *in itself*, therefore cannot be said to be incredible; and is to be believed on sufficient Evidence.

And yet it may be proper to observe, that there is something peculiar in it, and very distinct from most, if not all, other sorts of Miracles; as the Transaction is here necessarily more *secret*, and as others, not being Witnesses of it, are not so convinced there-
by,

by, as by the more open Facts. The Credit of Visions, if not supported by such open Facts, must depend upon the Word of those, who lay Claim to them. And here may be room for Deceit. Enthusiasts may work themselves up into an Imagination, that they are thus favoured, and mistake their own warm and strong Fancies for immediate divine Directions. And Cheats may take this way of imposing upon the World.

All this is indeed possible. And from hence it follows, 1. That should we meet with some Pretences of this Nature, which we cannot approve or vindicate altogether; still this will be no Reason for refusing our Belief to other more open Facts, of the Truth of which the World could better judge, and had the most convincing Evidence of. 2. That, as to Relations of this Nature, great Distinction ought to be made between such Dreams and Visions as are related to have been granted to others, and such as the Author represents to have happened to himself. The former can have very little Stress laid upon them, unless confirmed by other Evidence. The most prudent and cautious Persons may in this Case be deceived. And as to the latter, before we hastily give into them, it seems reasonable to enquire, how far the supposed Occasions of granting them were worthy of a Divine Interposition; how far the Persons claiming them were liable, by their natural

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Temper

Temper or Disposition, to be imposed upon in this Matter ; whether they are sober, cool, consistent Writers, or in any-wise wild, extravagant, and unreasonable ; lastly, whether they are Men of Probity, or not.—For if there be no Reason to suspect their Reports, but merely because these are Reports of supernatural Visions ; this, I apprehend, will not at all invalidate their Authority.

It is now so many Ages since the World has had any Experience of this kind, that all such Stories are apt to appear strange to us. And, indeed, there is now no Occasion for these Miracles ; insomuch that Pretences to them cannot but be suspected. In settled Times of Peace and Safety, the ordinary Directions of Scripture, and the common Assistances and Consolations of God's Spirit, are abundantly sufficient. But when the Church was in a State of continual Persecution and Danger, during those fiery Trials, it is very reasonable to suppose, that the Patience, Prudence, and Courage of Christians might want some farther Encouragement and Support. Extraordinary Cases required extraordinary Vouchsafements. And if God was pleased to communicate His Aids and Comforts to some Men, who at that time were under great Distress and Tribulation for the sake of His Gospel, and to instruct them by Visions, in Matters of Doubt and Difficulty, what should be done ; I cannot see

see any Reason for our Wonder. Whether He has done this, depends upon Evidence. That some Fathers assert it, is granted. We will now, having thus prepared our Way by these general Observations, go on to enquire, what this Gentleman has offered to disprove their Assertions.

Cyprian pretends to *nightly Visions*, and that the *Lord admonished* them even by *innocent Boys*, who were filled with the Spirit, and were *in Extasies*. We see, that this in part depended upon the Accounts of others, by which the good Father might possibly be deceived. However, we shall find more Instances from him below. And we may as well stay to consider at once what is alleged against his Veracity.

“ This Extasy was a temporary Madness, P. 97.
 “ or Loss of Senses; and is called by *Ter-*
 “ *tullian, The spiritual Virtue in which*
 “ *Prophecy consists.*” To support this, we
 have Citations from *Suidas*, *Mr. Dodwell*,
 and *Philo*; which, I think, we need not en-
 ter upon. Be this Point how it will, it is
 still a Matter of Opinion only, and does not
 belong to the present Enquiry; which is into
 the Truth of Facts.

“ From these Testimonies we may col- P. 98.
 “ lect, that the Prophecy of the primitive
 “ Church, by *Vision* or *Extasy*, was of the
 “ same Kind, as to its outward Appearance,
 “ with that *Divination by Fury*, as it was
 “ called,

“ called, among the Gentiles, which was
 “ practised by the *Delphic Pythia*, and Cu-
 “ *mæan Sibyl*.”— By what Rules of Rea-
 soning this Conclusion can be drawn, is past
 my Skill to find out. The regular way of
 shewing this, would have been to have laid
 before the Reader some Extracts from the
 primitive Writers, where they report In-
 stances of Persons in their own Times pro-
 phesying in the manner, in which the *Pythia*
 and *Sibyl* are represented, *foaming, raging,*
&c. Such a Comparison would have been
 to the Purpose. But has this Gentleman gi-
 ven us any one Instance of this kind? Are
 the Authorities of *Suidas*, Mr. *Dodwell*, and
Philo, sufficient to shew, that this was done
 in the primitive Church? As to *Tertullian*,
 the Sentence cited from him no-way relates
to his own Times, as may easily appear by
 turning to the Place, and examining the
 Context, but to *Adam* *; and can besides
 amount to no more than a Declaration of
 this Father’s Opinion; which is no Evidence
 of the general Persuasion of Christians in his
 Time; and which, whether true or false, is
 nothing to our present Purpose. The Whole
 therefore must rest on the Testimony of *St.*
Cyprian. And he indeed reports a Fact, as
 happening in those Days. But does he re-

* *Vid. Tertull. de Anima, 21.* We are also referred to
 c. 24. But I find nothing in this relating to our present
 Subject.

present it as at all parallel to the violent Rage and Distortions which attended the *Sibyl*, &c.? Will the Words *in ecstasi*, the only ones here used, imply any thing like this? Most certainly not. *St. Peter* is said, in the *Acts of the Apostles*, to have seen *εν εκτασει οραμα*, Ch. xi. 5. *a Vision in a Trance*, or Extasy. But does there appear in the whole Account any *temporary Madness*, or *Raging*, or *Foaming*? Not in the least. It pleased God, by this means, to instruct the Apostle in His Design of calling the Gentiles, and to direct him to go with the Messengers of *Cornelius*. But we see nothing extravagant in *St. Peter's* Behaviour on this Occasion; no Loss of his Senses, no Want of Judgment; in a word, nothing like the Conduct of the *Pythia*, &c. And the same might be the Case of the Visions mentioned by *Cyprian*, for any thing this Gentleman has urged to the contrary.

I am not clear, what he means by calling these Visions *prophetic Visions*. That they are represented as Divine Directions, is true. But I do not see, that any *future* Events were *foretold* in them, or that they were claimed on this Account: Which alone can *strictly* and *properly* intitle them to be called *prophetic*.

However, if the *Enquirer* has failed in this first Instance, he must be owned to be more happy in the next he produces, *viz. Montanus*, with his Associates and Disciples. These,
we

P. 99. we readily yield, may be justly ranked with those, or any other, Diviners among the Heathens. But it is quite amazing, that this Gentleman can say, that they “ first raised “ and propagated that Spirit of Enthusiasm “ in the Church, which subsisted in it for “ near a Century, under the Title of *Vision* “ and *Prophecy*.” — Can any thing be more incredible, than that Persons, whose Tenets and Pretences were so utterly abhorred and abominated by the Church, should have Power to introduce any Notions into it; should be followed in those very Pretences, by the chief Fathers, for near a Century?

Vid. Eu-
feb. H. E.
l. v. c. 16,
&c.

Ap. Cyp.
Ep. 75.

Any Ecclesiastical History will shew us, in what Light these Heretics were considered by the Orthodox in those Days. I shall cite only *Firmilian* the Friend of *Cyprian*, who, in an Epistle to him, says of them, “ In qui-
“ bus cum animadvertamus non veritatis
“ Spiritum, sed erroris fuisse; cognoscimus
“ eos, qui falsam illorum prophetiam contra
“ Christi fidem vindicant, Christum habere
“ non posse.” *When we consider these Men, as not led by the Spirit of Truth, but the Spirit of Error; we know, that such as vindicate their false Prophecy, contrary to the Faith of Christ, cannot have Christ.* This Epistle is still inserted among St. *Cyprian*’s. *Rigaltius* thinks it clear enough from the Style, that this very Father had translated it into *Latin*. And in the Note upon this
Passage,

Passage, he says, "*Hic manifestissime Firmilianus a Tertulliano dissentit; et sub persona Firmiliani Cyprianus Magistrum suum deserit.*" Here Firmilian most manifestly differs from Tertullian; and Cyprian, under the Cover and Words of Firmilian, leaves the Sentiments of his Master. And can any impartial Person suppose, that Cyprian would pretend to Visions, in Imitation of these very Persons, and be led by them into the like Errors? — Besides, his Visions are as different from those pretended to by the Montanists, as can be: Which farther shews the Weakness of the Supposition. Nay, *Eu-* L. v. c. 3; *sebius* tells us, that what gave Credit to the pretended Prophecies of Montanus, &c. were the many other miraculous Gifts, which then were in the Church.

It will not be easy to vindicate *Tertullian* on this Head. He was a Man of a very different Turn; warm, severe, and eager; and so far from being upon his Guard against the Errors of the *Montanists*, that he actually fell into them. And therefore there can be no Wonder, that "he was imposed upon by the Craft of these extatic Visionaries; and by the Warmth of his Temper, and the Force of his Prejudices, was drawn in to espouse any Delusion" of this Nature, that flattered his particular Zeal, and favoured his Opinions." This is the learned Doctor's Account; which we may rest in, and

P. 101.

and decline entering upon the Examination of the particular Cases he has produced from this Writer : Which, however, it may be proper to observe, are all of *Visions* that happened to *others*, and not to himself ; which therefore he could be no Judge of ; and, consequently, his Credulity in these Points will not destroy his Character for Veracity and Probity, as to others of a more open Nature, that were easily searched into, and could not well be imposed either upon himself, or upon the World, had the Relations been false.

The *Visions* of St. *Cyprian* were of another Kind ; which he reports as having been vouchsafed *to himself* on some particular Occasions and Exigencies of the Church. He is owned to be “ a Man of a more acute “ Head, and sober Mind ; ” which, when joined to the Character he has all along borne of Sanctity and Integrity, should, methinks, incline us to pay some Regard to his Claims and Pretensions, unless these could be disproved. I own, I cannot think what this Gentleman has offered sufficient to disprove them. *Cyprian* is said to be a Man “ fond “ of Power, and Episcopal Authority ; ” tho’ *Pontius*, his Cotemporary and Deacon, who wrote his Life, assures us, that he would willingly have declined this Office, and withdrawn himself from it, *Antiquioribus cedens, et indignum se titulo tanti honoris existimans*. But suppose this Charge true, will it justify
what

what follows? "whose Character would tempt us to suspect, that he was the Inventor, rather than the Believer, of such idle Stories." So that this pious and holy Martyr at last turns out a vile Cheat and Hypocrite. Surely, such random and improbable Charges can hurt no Character, unless perhaps that of those who bring them, or give way to them. Had the Father been deceived, still Christian Candour would suggest the most favourable Supposition, that he was led into the Mistake by the Warmth of his Temper; still we might acquit him of designed and wilful Lying. But it remains yet to be shewn, that he was deceived; and that his Appeals of this kind were not strictly true and just.

These Appeals are said to be "in all questionable Points of Doctrine or Discipline, which he had a mind to introduce into the Christian Worship." And if it had been so, what more proper Occasion for such heavenly Visions, than the determining such doubtful and questionable Points; which, perhaps, the ordinary Authority of Church-Governors, in those dangerous Times, might not alone be sufficient to determine?—This, however, was not the Case of all the Instances here brought; as will appear, if we go over them particularly.

"In a Letter to *Cæcilius*, he declares, that he had received a Divine Admonition
" to

“ to mix *Water with Wine in the Sacrament*
 “ of the *Eucharist*, in order to render it ef-
 “ *fectual*.” But was this any *questionable*
Point? Or can *Cyprian* be said to have de-
 sired to *introduce* it into the Church? We
 learn from *Justin Martyr* and *Irenæus*, that
 it was the common Custom of the Church
 in their Times, long before *St. Cyprian* wrote.
 Some, however, in this Father’s Days, cele-
 brated the Eucharist *in Water only*, leaving
 out the Wine. Against these the Father di-
 rects this whole Epistle, charging them with
 omitting what Christ both did and taught.
 And he introduces his Reasonings in this
 Ep. 63. manner: “ Nec nos putes — nostra et hu-
 “ mana conscribere, aut ultronea voluntate
 “ hoc nobis audacter assumere, cum medio-
 “ critatem nostram semper humili et vere-
 “ cunda moderatione teneamus; sed quando
 “ aliquid Deo aspirante et mandante præci-
 “ pitur, necesse est Domino servus fidelis
 “ obtemperet; excusatus apud omnes, quod
 “ nihil sibi arroganter assumat, qui offensam
 “ Domini timere compellitur, nisi faciat
 “ quod jubetur. Admonitos autem * nos
 “ scias, [ut in calice offerendo Dominica
 “ traditio fervetur, neque aliud fiat a nobis,
 “ quam quod pro nobis Dominus prior fe-
 “ cerit;] ut calix, qui in commemoratione
 “ ejus offertur, mixtus vino offeratur.” This

* One Manuscript hath *vos sciatis*. Vid. Ed. Fell.

is the whole Passage, which the *Enquiry* gives us mutilated, leaving out Cyprian's modest Expression concerning himself, and also, without any Mark of Omission, the important Words, which I have hooked in. The *English* of it is, *Think not, that I write my own private Sentiments, or the Doctrines of Men only; or that merely of my own Accord and Will I have boldly taken this Determination upon myself; as I have always an humble and modest Sense of my mean Abilities: But when God is pleased to order any thing by His inspired Command, the faithful Servant lies under the Necessity of obeying his Lord: Every one must excuse him, because he assumes nothing arrogantly to himself, who must fear the Lord's Displeasure, unless he obeys His Orders. And know, that I have been admonished, [that our Lord's Tradition be observed in offering the Cup, and that we do nothing, but what He before did for us;] that the Cup, which is offered in Commemoration of Him, have Wine in it mixed with Water.*

From hence we see, 1. That this Gentleman has not given us St. Cyprian's Meaning: And that the Admonition he received was not to mix Water with the Wine, but to mix Wine with the Water. This Difference, however it may appear at first Sight, is very material. For it is on all hands agreed, that Wine was one of the Elements appointed, and is essential to the Institution. The Omis-

sion

fion of it therefore was acting contrary to the Command and Pattern of Christ, who *Bingham*, instituted it. Whereas, since “there is no
L. xv. c. 2. “ positive Command [for mixing Water with
§. 7. “ Wine] in the Institution—it is common-
“ ly determined by modern Divines, as well
“ of the *Roman* as Protestant Communion,
“ that it is not essential to the Sacrament it-
“ self.”—I own, indeed, that *St. Cyprian*
pleads for the Mixture of *both*. Yet still the
Occasion of the Admonition was the laying
aside the Wine: The Subject of it must
therefore, properly speaking, have been the
Wine; the Use of which God insisted on,
and without which indeed this Sacrament
must be mangled and defective.

But, 2. What if it be questioned, whether
this Admonition was in the Way of an im-
mediate supernatural Vision? There may be
perhaps some Reason to think the contrary.
It is certain, that in the Course of the Epistle
there is no farther mention of the Admoni-
tion. The Father goes on to argue from
the Scriptures, and particularly from the
Words of the Institution: And so far is he
from insisting upon any Authority on ac-
count of such a Vision, that we see expressly,
he mentions his own *Meanness*, and lays the
whole Stress upon the Command and Exam-
ple of Christ. Nor are we told *when*, or *by*
whom, he was thus admonished. The Words
do not necessarily imply a Divine Direction
peculiarly to himself. They *may* mean no
more,

more, after all, than the general Directions of Scripture, or perhaps the Advice and Directions of wise and good Men, who had instructed him, or whom he might have consulted on this Occasion.—I do not affirm, that they actually were intended to mean no more. I lay down this only as a Conjecture, which may not be wholly groundless, and which may deserve the Consideration of the learned Reader.—If the other Reading, mentioned above, be the true one, there is still less Ground for supposing any miraculous Direction here, as then the Person admonishing might be the Father himself.

The next Instance, which he brings out of *Cyprian*, will be soon dismissed. The Bishop threatens some “to execute what he was ordered to do against them in a Vision, if they did not desist.” The *Latin* Words are, *Utar ea admonitione, qua me Dominus uti jubet. I will use that Power of admonishing, or correcting, which the Lord has ordered me to use, or intrusted to me.* Which is no more than what any common Bishop might say on such an Occasion. These Words imply no Vision, tho’ the Doctor hath put the Words, *in a Vision*, in *Italics*, as if they were Part of what *Cyprian* saith; nor do they extend farther than to the ordinary Authority of the Governors of the Christian Church. And if they did, we have nothing offered to invalidate the Testimony.

P. 102;

Ep. 9.

Ep. 69.

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“*pianus*”

"*pianus*" &c. Here indeed he very clearly lays Claim to the Divine Directions, granted to him on consulting God. Which, for any thing that appears to the contrary, may be true.

The Three next Instances may be considered together. They relate to his ordaining Three very eminent Confessors, who had almost suffered Martyrdom, and had, as it were, miraculously escaped; being, as we may say, providentially reserved for the Service of the Church. This he gives his Clergy and People an Account of; as, being at a Distance from them, he could not consult them, as he used to do in Times of Peace. He says, the illustrious Courage and Piety of those Confessors superseded the Necessity of the usual Scrutiny and Testimonies. One of these he represents as having been favoured with a Divine Vision to persuade him to accept the Office. He says, that he himself was admonished and instructed *divina dignatione* to ordain another; and, with regard to the Third, that there went before *divina suffragia*; and that it appeared *illum divinitus reservatum, qui ad Ecclesiasticam disciplinam ceteris esset exemplo*.

Now, as to these two last, it may possibly bear a Doubt, whether *Cyprian* intended to claim any immediate Divine Directions. It is possible he might think, that the Event, the extraordinary Sufferings, Escapes, and Characters of the Persons ordained, sufficiently

ently intimated the Will of God in this Matter. It is certain, that *divina dignatio*, in this Writer, does not always imply a Miracle; since it is once applied to *most of the Bishops of the whole Christian World* *. —

But let us grant, that in these Cases he appeals to Divine Revelations. How will it appear, that the Appeals were false? Dr. *Middleton* seems to put a most unkind, as well as unjust, Construction upon them.

" This then seems to be the Meaning of P. 104

" *Cyprian's Diligence in the Use of Visions*,

" that, whenever he thought fit to exert his

" Episcopal Authority, *without the previous*

" *Consent of his Clergy and People*, he might

" obviate their Murmurs by alleging a Di-

" vine Command for it." If this had been

the Case, yet can we think, that his Clergy

and People were so extremely weak, as to

be presently silenced and satisfied by a *mere*

Pretence, without any Ground or Founda-

tion? Or can we think, that a Person of

Cyprian's Judgment could hope thus to sa-

tisfy them, or rest in so bad a Plea, when it

was easy for him to urge many better and

stronger? If therefore the Clergy and People

allowed these Claims of their Bishop, it is a

great Presumption, that they were just; and

a good Confirmation of them.

* *Ep. 63.* " *Episcopus plurimos Ecclesiis Dominicis in*
" *toto mundo divina dignatione præpositos.*" In much the
same manner as the modern Style, *By Divine Providence*
Bishop, &c.

Besides, how would this Gentleman have had him have “called them together, and consulted them in common,” when the Distractions of the Times had taken him from them? And when he might presume upon their Approbation of such truly eminent Persons? And so indeed he does—*quod vos scio et libenter amplecti, et optare tales in Ecclesia nostra quamplurimos ordinari.*

Farther, we learn in Two of these Epistles, that St. Cyprian did not act in these Cases alone, but was assisted by *some Collegues* then present with him. So that he took all the Advice the Times would allow; and, indeed, more than he was under any Necessity of taking.

For tho’ Dr. Middleton represents it, as “the Custom of those Days, in all Clerical Ordinations,” to consult the Clergy and People; yet a very learned Author * has shewn at large, that Cyprian was not bound to do so by any Law of God or the Church; and that it was “by the free Motion of his own Discretion and Goodness,—a personal Virtue and Prudence, in the peculiar Circumstances of that meek and holy Martyr.” So very little is he to be suspected of any undue Fondness of Power.

“But the most memorable Effect of any of his Visions was, his Flight and Re-

* Original Draught of the primitive Church, p. 243, &c.

“treat,

“ treat, when he withdrew himself from
“ his Church, in the Time of Persecution.”

This is represented, as having given great
Scandal; as what both *Cyprian* and *Pontius*
were solicitous to excuse; which they do
by pleading a particular Revelation from
Heaven to command him to withdraw: A
Plea, which “ was nothing else, without
“ doubt, but a mere Fiction, contrived for the
“ Purpose of quieting the Scandal—and is,
“ in Effect, confuted by himself, in another
“ Letter—in which he declares, that it was
“ the Advice and Authority of one *Tertullus*,
“ which prevailed with him to withdraw
“ himself,” &c.

P. 104,
105.

This is the Whole of the Objection. In
Answer to which we may observe, 1. That
whatever some sour or over-severe Persons
might think, this Retreat appears to have
been, upon the Whole, justifiable and pru-
dential. And the Father had no Occasion
to have pretended a Vision to excuse it, if
this had not been the Case.

2. It is unreasonable to charge so eminent a
Champion of the Christian Cause, who after-
wards suffered with such Resolution, with any
Cowardice, or Fear of suffering. This is what
Pontius urged, and, I own, I think it satisfac-
tory. “ Vultis scire secessum illum non fuisse
“ formidinem? Ut nihil aliud excussem, ipse
“ postmodum passus est: quam passionem
“ utique ex more vitaret, si et ante vitâisset.”

Would you be assured, that this Retreat was not Fear? To omit other Defences, he himself afterwards suffered: Which he would then have avoided and fled from as usual, if he had done so before. Nor does it appear, that he ever repented of this Retreat, or accused himself on this Account.

3. The only Places in St. Cyprian's Writings, that I remember, which appear to speak of a particular Revelation concerning this
 Ep. 9, 14. Matter, are these; "*quando ad vos reducem*" "*me Dominus fecerit, qui, ut secederem,*" "*jussit;*" *when God shall bring me back again to you, who ordered my Departure from you;* and, "*sicut Domini mandata instruunt;*" *as the Commands of The Lord instruct me.* These are general Words. *When, or how,* these Orders were given, is not said. Here is no mention of a special Revelation from Heaven. And possibly nothing of this might be alluded to. Nothing more can *necessarily* be understood by them, than the Divine Providence thus ordering and directing Affairs. Nor can I see, that the blessed Martyr any more represents his Retreat, as the Consequence of a miraculous Interposition, than he depends upon a Miracle to bring him back again. — Besides, the Command here given might have been that plain one of Christ in the Gospel, *When they persecute you in this City, flee you into another.* This Rigaltius proposes in the first place, as what the

Not. ad
 Ep. 2.

the Father had in his Eye; tho' indeed he adds the particular Favour of an immediate Direction, as well as other prudential Reasons: Which shews, that he thought *all these* very far from being inconsistent.—And *Pontius*, after having represented the Bishop's Retreat as being agreeable to the Divine Admonitions which had been granted him, going on to consider the good Consequences which followed it, appears to understand its being ordered by God, as ordered by His Providence, which preserved so useful a Servant for the particular Exigencies of those difficult Times. “Nonne hæc, oro, con-
“ filia divina sunt? Hoc fieri sine Deo po-
“ tuit? Viderint qui putant posse fortuitu
“ ista contingere.” *Are not these Counsels divine? Could this happen without the Ap-
pointment of God? Let them look to it, who
imagine, that these things could happen by
Chance.* The least we can say, is, that *Pon-
tius* looked upon the Advantages of *Cyprian's*
Retreat, as Proofs of the Divine Command,
which he had received.

4. This Gentleman appears not to have rightly represented the Passage where *St. Cyprian* is said to have withdrawn himself by the Advice of *Tertullus*. If I understand him right, he only says, that *Tertullus* advised him to *continue* in his Retreat. He first expresses his Wishes and Desires to see his Clergy again; then he says, that, for the

Ep. 5.

fake of some other Advantages, he determines rather “ADHUC INTERIM latebram et “quietem tenere,” *to keep himself STILL secret and hid: And this is what, he says, Tertullus counselled, “Ut cautus et moderatus “existerem, nec me in conspectum publicum, et maxime ejus loci, ubi toties flagitatus et quæsitus fuissim, temere committerem;” That I should be cautious, and refrain from appearing rashly in public; and especially in that Place, where I had been so often called and sought for. — How then does the Father confute himself? What Shadow of an Inconsistency is there between this Account, and the other of his having been ordered by God at first to withdraw? These we see relate to two different Times. — Not but, supposing they had referred to the same, still Cyprian might have had at once the Command of God, and the Advice of his Friends. I observed, that Rigaltius mentions both with Approbation. So that, in every Light, this Gentleman’s Argument is weak and groundless.*

On the Whole, then, if the Commands mentioned by St. Cyprian were not special Divine Revelations, were only the common Orders of Scripture, of Divine Providence, or of human Prudence (in which last Sense we may say that every Man is directed by God not to expose his Life more than needs must); all the Reflections and Censures we
have

have here before us, either on the Conduct, or the Plea, of the good Father, are wholly impertinent. And even on the Supposition, that he actually appealed to a supernatural Vision in this Case, still this has not been proved to be a mere Fiction: There will be no Occasion thus to put every thing in the very worst Light possible; and, rather than impeach the Veracity of so venerable a Writer, we may be inclined to believe, that God, on this as well as other Occasions, granted him a special Direction how to act on so critical and hazardous an Occasion, as that which then presented itself.

I have been the longer on this Instance, because, as represented in the *Enquiry*, it bore hardest upon the Character of St. *Cyprian*; charging him at once with deserting his pastoral Duty out of Cowardice, and wiping off the Scandal thus given by downright Falshood. — But I hope my Readers now see Reason to think better of him.

We need not enter on a Defence of *Dionysius* Bishop of *Alexandria*, a Man of an amiable Character, who, in an Epistle quoted by *Eusebius*, claimed a Divine Direction to retreat. What has been offered in Vindication of St. *Cyprian*, may, in a great measure, have place here, and save us the Trouble of a particular Enquiry. I shall only add, that these Directions given to *Dionysius* appear to have received some Confirmation from the Authority

Authority of *Eusebius*, who has inserted them in his History, without any Blame or Exception; which we can hardly think one of his Judgment and Knowledge would have so soon after done, had they deserved no better Character, than that of mere Fictions. It is plain, however, from a closer View of
 E.H. l. vi. *Eusebius*, that no Cowardice could be ob-
 c. 40. jected to *Dionysius*, who continued Four Days at home after the Search began.

As to the Vision claimed by *Jerom*, which
 P. 107. the Doctor mentions, he is without the Limits of my Design; and therefore I shall pass it over, without determining any thing about it. Be it true or false, I cannot see how it prejudices my present Reasoning. Only I beg Leave to observe, that the Two Commands said to have been given to *Dionysius* and *Jerom* were not so contrary, as this Author would represent them. For *Jerom* doth not say, that he was forbidden to read *Heretical* Books, but *Heathen* ones; nor is the Reason assigned, lest he should not be able to confute them. Probably he might suppose, that the Prohibition intended, that he might not be turned, by too much Application to profane Writers, *Cicero*, *Virgil*, and *Horace*, from more edifying Studies.—

“ If *Jerom*’s Vision deserved to be treated
 “ by his Contemporaries as a Fiction, I see
 “ no Reason—why the Visions of *Cyprian*
 “ and *Dionysius* should.—merit the same
 “ Treat-

"Treatment." And that, because we have no Reason to think, that any sober unprejudiced Persons of their Times ever looked upon them as such. That some contemned Dreams and Visions in general, *Cyprian* owns; Ep. 68. but says, they were such as *would rather believe any thing against a Priest, than believe a Priest.* This the *Enquirer* takes notice of; but to what End, I cannot perceive. If that was the Case, had not the Father room to complain, and object to their Testimony? It is certain enough, but sure it is no Matter of Mirth to any Friend of Religion, that there are too many such at present, who are prejudiced against the Clergy, *as such*; who are inclined to doubt and disbelieve whatever comes from *them*; who do not make them the same fair and equitable Allowances, which they are willing to make other Writers; nay, who plainly pay more Regard to Heathen Authorities in general, than to those of the Christian Saints and Martyrs. But all we can gather from hence, is, that this Want of Candour and Impartiality, this unhappy Turn and Disposition of Mind, renders them most incompetent Judges of these Points. It is to cooler and more ingenuous Examiners, that we must appeal.

In the antient Narrative of the Martyrdom of St. *Ignatius*, mention is made of some *Dreams*, which God had imparted to his Followers the Night after he suffered; which this Gentleman thinks *Lucian* alluded to, and ridiculed.

ridiculed. Very possibly he might; and possibly not. And if he did, it is of no Weight at all. But this Gentleman is not willing to omit even the slightest Reflection, that but seems to be thrown on the primitive Christians.—But this, I hope, will not destroy the Credit of those Dreams. In truth, this much strengthens the Reality of the Fact. *Lucian* would hardly have bantered, what was not generally believed among the Christians.—

However, I would ask the Doctor, whether these Dreams are here represented as natural, or as miraculous. I can hardly think he will say, *as natural*. They are reported, as Answers to Prayers, as Assurances of the Blessedness of the Saint, and Subjects of their Joy, and glorifying God. And if they are supposed to be no more than common or accidental, I cannot see what they have to do in this Part of the *Enquiry*. But, if he allows them to have been esteemed miraculous, how will he reconcile this to the Position he set out with, “that there is not the least

P. 3.

“Claim or Pretension in all their several
“Pieces [of the Apostolic Fathers] to any of
“those extraordinary Gifts, which are the
“Subject of this Enquiry?” This “Narrative,”

P. 108.

“he owns, “was drawn up by Persons,
“who had accompanied the Martyr from
“*Asia to Rome*.” They therefore lived and wrote within the Apostolic Age, or however presently afterwards. One of the extraordinary

dinary

ordinary Gifts, which are the Subjects of the Enquiry, are these miraculous Dreams and Visions; or else the Mention of them, and indeed this whole Section, is wholly impertinent. Here then we have a *full* Claim and Pretension to these, in direct Contradiction to this Gentleman's Assertion.

And what has he offered to disprove this Pretension? Nothing but the imagined Scoff of *Lucian*. — Indeed he says, “that from

P. 109.

“all the Accounts of them [those Visions] that remain—there seems to be the greatest Reason to suspect, that they were all contrived, or authorized at least, by the leading Men of the Church, for the sake of moderating, and governing with more Ease, the unruly Spirit of the Populace in those Times of Danger and Difficulty.” Not one Circumstance, not a Syllable, of this Supposition is at all suitable to the Relation *last mentioned*. And we have seen, that *St. Cyprian*, the Person principally struck at, is acquitted of such an iniquitous Scheme and Contrivance. — Nor, indeed, had the Bishops of those Times any Occasion to have recourse to it for the Purpose here mentioned. Common Christians in general were far from being then so headstrong or unruly. They, who continued in the Communion of the Church, had a just Regard and Duty for their Governors, complied gladly with their Advice and Discipline, and were easily enough

Primitive
Christia-
nity, p.
159, 160.

enough kept in Order by the Exercise of their common and ordinary Power and Authority “Bishops and Ministers,” to use the learned Dr. *Cave*’s Words, “were then looked upon as the common Parents of Christians “whom, as such, they honoured, and to “whom they repaired for Counsel and Direction in all important Cases.—No Respect, no Submission, was thought great enough, whereby they might do Honour to them,” &c. And could pretended Visions then be wanted? It is plain, that the Account of this Gentleman is no less injurious to the Body of the Christian People, than to their Clergy.

I need not add much to disprove the several Purposes here subjoined, as those for which these Visions were *contrived*, or *authorized*; viz. To excuse some Conduct liable to Censure. This has had its Consideration—To enforce some Doctrine or Discipline now well relished; and to confirm things trifling and even hurtful. But, what Proof is there of these Ends? Hitherto we have had none. St. *Cyprian*, the chief Person concerned stands clear of those Accusations. And as to what is related in the Account of *Ignatius*’ Martyrdom, it is impossible to suppose, that the Relaters had any such Designs in View. Nor are their Dreams applied to any one of the Purposes here mentioned. Here was no suspicious Conduct to be excused, no doubtful

doubtful Doctrine or Discipline to be enforced, nothing trifling or superstitious to be confirmed. We cannot therefore account for them in these Ways. And, indeed, in the foregoing Page this Gentleman has intimated another Account of them, inconsistent with these, by saying, that the Thoughts of the Companions of the Martyr, to whom the Assurance of his Happiness was thus vouchsafed, "for several Months past, had been employed on nothing else but the Subject of his Martyrdom." On the Whole, then, we have all Reason to think, that these Dreams were *real*, and also *supernatural*.

The Two next Pages seem a Digression, and might be passed over without any Observation. The Substance of them is, that before *Montanus* Prophecies in general, even those of the *Old Testament*, were supposed by the Fathers to have been delivered in *Extasies*, and attended with *Loss of Senses*; but that afterwards the Fathers, who wrote against *Montanus*, made this Madness a Mark of a false Prophet, nay, of diabolical Illusion. All that will follow from this Account, supposing it true, is, that some of the Fathers were mistaken in a Matter of Opinion: But it will not support or justify a Conclusion, that any of them were inclined to give out false Facts. We will readily yield, that they were not infallible; and only insist upon what we

P. 110,
&c.

we hope appears, that they were not Fools and Knaves.

However, we have shewn above, that Extasies, and Loss of Senses, were different things; and that the Visions of St. *Cyprian*, and the other Fathers, which we have vindicated, were nothing like the Ravings of the *Sibyls*, and the *Montanists*. And it seems a little inconsistent, that *Montanus* "first gave
" a Vogue to prophetic Visions and Extasies;" and that "the *Montanists* brought
" those Extasies in Disgrace;" both which the *Enquirer* has not scrupled to assert. Is it, for Instance, probable, that *Miltiades* should write against the Extasies of *Montanus*; and St. *Cyprian*, who flourished several Years afterwards, and had no more Regard for this Heretic, should yet pretend to such Extasies in Imitation of him? It is plain from hence, that the Visions of *Cyprian* had no sort of Relation or Similitude to that Madness, which before had been so justly disproved and confuted by *Miltiades*, &c.

"It appears to have been the current Opinion of those earlier Days, that the Prophets also of the Old Testament received
" and uttered their Revelations in Extasy." In Support of which *Justin Martyr*, *Athenagoras*, and *Tertullian*, are cited. By the earlier Days here, the Context shews, that we must understand the Times prior to the *Montanists*: But the Two last Writers flourished

rished *after Montanus*. — As to *Tertullian*, we observed before, that he was deluded by them. And it is very remarkable, that at the Close of the Sentence here quoted, there are these Words, which this Gentleman chose to keep out of Sight; “*de quo inter nos et psychicos quæstio est,*” concerning which Point there is a Dispute between us and the animal Persons: By whom he means the Catholics, as is well known, and as Dr. Cave observes in his Life. So that we have here full Proof, that it was not the Opinion of the Catholics of those Days, that a Prophet should lose his Reason.

Neither do either of the other Two Authorities come up to the Point. *Justin Martyr* makes no mention at all of Extasies or Visions; but says only, that God’s Spirit descended upon the Prophets, making use of them as *Instruments of revealing heavenly Knowledge*; without once intimating in what manner He discovered this to them. — *Athenagoras* indeed adds these Words, καὶ ἐκστα-
 σιν των εν αυτοις λογισμων. But, I think, these will not signify, as the Gentleman interprets them, “while they were under the Divine Impulse, they were transported out of their Senses, and delivered in Extasy,” &c. The Words appear to imply only a *Suspension or Intermision of their own Reasonings*, and not any temporary Disorder in their Understandings. It was not of their
 S natural

Cohort.
ad gentes.

Legat. pro
Christi-
anis, Ed.
Ox. p. 37.

natural Powers or Faculties, but from the Inspirations of God's Spirit, which they spake. Neither will this therefore prove, what it is brought to prove.

But if the Two last Pages must be looked upon as little to the Purpose of this Gentleman's Book, the next, I am sure, is more so: P. 112. which is to shew, that the Antients "were mistaken in their Notion of the *Perpetuity of Prophecy*." And suppose they were, what can be gathered from it? Not, surely, that their Testimony concerning past or present Facts is not to be depended upon. The Consequence of this would be, as no Man uninspired can certainly look into the Future, therefore no such is to be believed.

We have now done with the Head of *Visions*. But the Doctor has not done with *Cyprian*; and, as if he was conscious, that he had not yet disproved his Veracity, he gives us, tho' quite out of place, two or three of his *wonderful Stories*, as he calls them, relating to Divine Judgments inflicted on such as had lapsed, or denied Christ. One was immediately struck dumb; another seized and torn with an unclean Spirit. Both might have been true Instances, notwithstanding any thing here alleged. The next Instance was of an Infant, to whom had been given some Bread dipt in Wine, which had been offered to an Idol: Which was afterwards discovered by the Crying and Uneasiness

easiness of the Child in time of Prayer, and its vomiting up the Eucharist, which was given it. This, I own, sounds strange. *Cyprian* says he was an *Eye-witness* of it. But what can he be supposed to have seen? Only the consequent Facts. The Causes he may be supposed mistaken in, without impeaching his Veracity, as to what he knew. Something extraordinary there appears to be in the Circumstances. How far this was or was not Miracle, I will not undertake to say. But supposing it was purely natural, it might naturally, in those Times, make an Impression strong enough on the Minds of Persons, and those not very credulous neither, to be related in the manner it is, without any Imputation on their Sincerity.—We have Three other Instances of Judgments happening to Apostates, who had presumed to partake of the Sacrament. These being grown Persons, the Stories are easier to be admitted. We may well suppose, that God, in that early Age of the Church, when it was tried with Discouragements of the most severe and terrible Kind; when it had no natural Helps to support its Honour and Discipline; would be pleased to fence and guard it with some supernatural Effects and Displays of His own Almighty Power, and take care, that His holy Ordinance should not be without proper Punishment heedlessly and sacrilegiously intruded upon and profaned by wicked Idolaters. Our

P. 115. Author owns, and shews, that these Stories “were of the greatest Use” to prevent these, “and to support the Discipline of the Church.” And therefore God’s interposing in the manner here represented must then have had an excellent Influence. And I cannot but think it a much fairer and more probable Supposition, than what this Gentleman makes, that these Stories “were partly forged, and partly “dressed up and aggravated into this tragical Form, from some accidental Disorders,” &c. Had they been thus *accidental*, they could not have carried Terror enough with them to have guarded the Discipline of the Church. From their being urged in the manner they were, it is plain, they were not then considered as accidental; and it will be impossible for any one, at this Distance of Time, to prove them to have been *merely accidental*.

SECT. 5. *Of Expounding the Scriptures by Divine Revelation.*

P. 116. **T**HE Fifth Miracle, which is here reviewed, is that “of expounding the “Scriptures, or the Mysteries of God, by a “Divine Inspiration.” The *Enquirer* says, that this “is claimed by the primitive Fathers:” But the only one he quotes is *Justin Martyr*. And him we considered before, and shewed, that this Gentleman had totally mistaken

mistaken his Meaning, and built this Charge on the mere Sound of Words, without attending to the Sense of them. Nor has he here added any other Passages out of this or any other Father, or any fresh Reasonings, to enforce what he had urged before on this Subject ; unless it be the observing, that
 ‘ Men of Piety, when under Persecution,
 ‘ are apt to expect, and listen to, every Pre-
 ‘ tence of a Divine Interposition in favour
 ‘ of what they believe ; and, that this was
 ‘ the Case of Bishop *Fisher*, with regard to
 ‘ the *Maid of Kent*.’ Which Observation and Instance, how wide they are of the Mark, every common Reader must of himself see. They neither of them relate to a miraculous Gift of *expounding the Scriptures*. And as to the general Point, it is no Consequence, that because learned and good Men have been sometimes deceived in a few particular Instances, by confident Pretences of Visions and Revelations ; therefore Numbers of others, during Two Centuries at least, should one and all be imposed upon in Matters of frequent Occurrence ; sometimes, where they must be supposed themselves to have been employed and concerned.

P. 117,
118.

SECT. 6. *Of the Gift of Tongues.*

WHAT I have said of this supposed Gift of interpreting Scripture, is in some measure true of the last Gift considered ; that

P. 119. of *Tongues*. This rests on the Authority of *Irenæus*; and there is nothing added here to second his Authority, nor much to overthrow it. I shall not detain or trouble the Reader with a Repetition of what has been already said on this Subject, tho', in Reality, it obviates almost every thing, which is here urged.—What is new, or has not been considered before, I will now attend to.

Life of
Irenæus,
§. 9.

Irenæus, our Author asserts, wanted this Miracle himself, for the Propagation of the Gospel among the *Gauls*.—And Dr. *Cave* indeed says, that he *plainly intimated*, “that he was forced to learn the Language of the Country.” But the Passage the Doctor alludes to is, I suppose, that in the Preface of his Work, where, making an Apology for his Style, he pleads his Abode among the *Celtæ*: *Και περι βαρβαρον διαλεκτον το πλειστον αχολουμενων*. Now these Words express only, that he was *for the most part employed in a barbarous Language*; which may be full as well understood of *using, and speaking, and writing* a barbarous Language, as in *learning* it. Nay, the former is a better Excuse, and more to his Purpose, than the other would have been; as continually conversing in a rough and unpolished Language is more apt to spoil the Style, than the learning it. And therefore this, being more agreeable to the Context, appears to be the justest rendering of the Words.

But if the Whole of the Difficulty were allowed (for I think it cannot amount to an Objection), will it overthrow the plain, positive, express Testimony of *Irenæus*, that this Gift of Tongues was indulged to some in his Days? St. *Paul's* Question, one would think, should determine this Point; *Do ALL speak with Tongues?* Even in those Days, when this Miracle is allowed to have existed, it was not common to all Christians; not even to all of Rank and Eminence, who were Partakers of some of the extraordinary Gifts. It can therefore be no Presumption against the Truth of a Relation, that such a Power was in the Church at any particular Time; tho' neither this nor that learned Advocate of the Christian Cause, nor even the Relator himself, was favoured with it. Whether *Irenæus* himself was or not (for the Negative cannot, I think, be evinced from his Words above), we have no Occasion to enquire: We may rely upon the Account he has given, unless there be any stronger Exceptions to his Testimony.

“ But no succeeding Father claims, or so much as mentions, the same Pretensions*.” P. 120.
 —If they had, would this Gentleman have been

* Dr. *Middleton* here, p. 120. says not only, that the Fathers did not claim this Miracle, but denies that any one of them ventured to “ speak of it in any other manner, than as a Gift “ peculiar to the first Christians, in the Times of the Apostles.” On which the Author of the *Letter* to him very properly

been more ready to have believed them? Would he not have said, as in other Cases, they only followed the Authority, and copied the Language, of *Irenæus*?—If they have not mentioned them, the Reason seems to be clear enough: It was, because they knew no Instances of the same in their own Times; and they did not chuse to record Facts, which they had no Proof nor Certainty of. This then shews their Wisdom and Honesty, and entirely wipes off the uncandid Reflection, that they asserted things at random, without any Enquiry, in a blind and servile Imitation of one or two eminent Leaders: Whereas we find, that not even the Authority of *Irenæus*, which was as high in the primitive Church as any of his Age, could induce them to go beyond the Bounds of Truth.

Whether we know the Time, or not; there was a precise Time, when Miracles ceased in the Church. It is very probable, that they did not all cease at once. As they were granted on some peculiar Exigencies, so they were severally withdrawn, when such Necessity ceased. Mr. *Dodwell* thinks the Gift of Tongues withdrawn in

properly remarks: *But who are they, that speak of it as a Gift peculiar to the Times of the Apostles? You say, there is not a single Father, who ventures to speak of it in any other manner. Well, bring but Six Antenicene Fathers, who speak of it in this manner, and I will give up the whole Point, p. 160.*

the

the Reign of *Marcus Aurelius*. I have offered a Reason above, which appears to me to have its Weight, why it might very properly be withdrawn before the other miraculous Gifts. But surely the Silence of succeeding Authors, as to it, cannot shew, that *Irenæus* had no Grounds for mentioning it.

‘ But no mention is made of any one particular Person, after the Apostolic Times, who exercised this Gift.’—This Point, tho’ the Gentleman is ready to “ risk the Merit of his Argument upon” it, is really a Point of no Consequence. The Meaning, I imagine, is, that we have not the Name recorded of any Man, who was thus honoured. But, as I said before, I see no Conclusion of Moment, which can be drawn from hence.

That “ the Gift of Tongues cannot be easily counterfeited,” I am ready to agree with this Author. But that this was the Reason, why a Claim to this Miracle was sooner dropped than a Pretence to others, is his own mere Conjecture. One would rather think, that the Difficulty, or rather Impossibility, of supporting such a Claim, had it been false, for ever so little a time, should have kept any Persons of common Sense from making it without Reason; and that the earliest Fathers and Christians should have been as cautious and tender of their Characters, as any after them. They could not avoid seeing, that they must thus immediately expose themselves
to

P. 121,

to the Derision and Contempt of all Persons of any Understanding and Sagacity.

And so indeed they must have done by fraudulent Pretences to *other* Miracles. Such would very soon have been discovered. This Gentleman indeed affirms, that "all the other
 " extraordinary Gifts of *healing Diseases*,
 " *casting out Devils, Visions, and extatic*
 " *Revelations*, afford great room to Im-
 " postors to exert all their Craft of surprising
 " and dazzling the Senses of the Simple, the
 " Credulous, and the Superstitious, of all
 " Ranks." But we must distinguish between these kinds of Miracles. *Visions* and *Revelations* are not Appeals to the Senses of others, and cannot therefore properly be produced in Evidence, or proved to them, but by some more *open Facts*. But as to *healing Diseases*, and *casting out Devils*, it is not easy to conceive how these can be counterfeited. A Cheat here must soon be seen thro', by those who are present, and unprejudiced; and they are the best Evidences of a Divine Commission. The *Gift of Tongues* itself is not a plainer, nor a stronger. It is not therefore to be imagined, that the Pretence to those should have been maintained, after the Claim to this was dropped, on any other Supposition, than the Reality of them. If the Fathers dropped the one, out of a Fear of Discovery and Disgrace, they acted very injudiciously to keep up the
 Plea

Plea of the others; which must have presently failed, and equally tended to their Confutation and Confusion. This therefore could never be the Reason, why the other miraculous Gifts were related, as later than that of Tongues. The Supposition is not only disingenuous, but highly improbable; and makes the Relators act not only contrary to the Principles of Probity and Virtue, but of Prudence and common Sense itself.

If we could give no Reason, as this Gentleman asserts we cannot, why the Gift of Tongues “should be withdrawn, and the “rest continued;” still our Ignorance with regard to this Divine Counsel, as is in a manner confessed, can no-way invalidate the Fact. We must humbly leave it to God’s infinite Wisdom and Goodness to indulge His Church with the Powers He thinks fit, and to withdraw them when He pleases. There may be Reasons, which *we* cannot perceive nor imagine.—However, One Reason I have before offered, and shall leave it to this Gentleman’s Consideration.

The Argument in the following Page, I own, much surpasses all my Comprehension. This Author would conclude, “that the “*Gift of Tongues* may be considered as a “proper Test and Criterion, for determining “the miraculous Pretensions of all Churches, “which derive their Descent from the Apostles; and consequently, if in the List of “their

“ their extraordinary Gifts they cannot shew
 “ us this, we may fairly conclude, that they
 “ have none else to shew, which are real and
 “ genuine.” The Reader, I doubt not, cannot
 but be surpris’d at this Position. It appears,
 if not well qualified, to strike directly at the
 Truth of all the Miracles in the *Old Testa-*
ment; nay, even those of *Christ* Himself. The
 Doctor, I own, confines his Observation to
 the Christian Church *after the Apostles*: Nor
 do I accuse him of saying, that there can in
 no Case be other Miracles, where there is
 not the Gift of Tongues. Yet, to prevent
 any Misconstructions, or bad Consequences,
 which may be drawn from hence, I would
 observe, that as other miraculous Powers
 could subsist, and were granted by God, du-
 ring the Ages of *Moses*, the *Prophets*, and
 our *Saviour*, without the Gift of Tongues;
 I see no Reason, why this might not have
 been also the Case of any other Ages after
 the Apostles. For, if the supposed Absence
 of this great Gift does not necessarily infer
 the Absence of all others, at any given Time;
 it cannot do the same, at any other Time.
 Neither can I see, why this must be the Test
 of others, any more than the others of this.
 This, I own, was peculiarly serviceable at
 the Beginning of Christianity. And were
 not all the rest so too?

But, let us see what Reasons the *Enquirer*
 has given for so strange a Conclusion. To
 me

me they appear very weak : But it is fit the Reader should judge for himself. I shall a little shorten the Words; but will deprive the Argument of none of its Strength. This
 " was the first Gift, conferred upon the Apo-
 " stles in a public and illustrious manner, and
 " reckoned ever after among the principal.—
 " But in succeeding Ages, when Miracles be-
 " gan to be—suspected,—this Gift is men-
 " tioned but once, by a single Writer, and
 " then vanished of a sudden, without the least
 " Notice given—of the Manner, Time,
 " or Cause, of its vanishing. Lastly, in the
 " latter Ages, when the Miracles of the
 " Church were—found to be false by our
 " Reformers—this Gift has never been—
 " pretended to by the *Romanists* themselves,
 " tho' they challenge all the other Gifts of
 " the Apostolic Days. From all which we
 " may reasonably infer, that the *Gift of*
 " *Tongues* may be considered as a proper
 " Test" &c.* Now, supposing every Par-
 ticular of this Account true (tho' it is false,
 that Miracles began to be suspected in the
 Days of *Irenæus*); it cannot afford the Ap-
 pearance of an Argument to prove, that the
 Church after the Apostles had no Miracles,
 because it had not the Gift of Tongues. I
 can discern no Connection between these Po-
 sitions: I can reduce the Reasoning to no
 sort of Form. This Gift was granted to

* The Remainder of the Sentence, as above.

the Apostles, mentioned only by *Irenæus*, and never claimed afterwards; therefore it is our Rule of judging of the Reality of other Gifts. Where, I pray, is the Consequence? Is a Claim to others therefore false, because this was not claimed at the same time? Had we no other Argument to urge against these Pretences of the *Romanists*, this alone would not disprove them.

However, had the Conclusion been true and just, it would not answer Dr. *Middleton's* Purpose. The Testimony of *Irenæus* remains unshaken. At least, therefore, in his Time, this was in the List of their extraordinary Gifts. And therefore they might *then at least* have some others to shew. And if we have Reason to believe the Reality of *any one*, the Design of this celebrated Book is overthrown.

SECT. 7. *Of some other Accounts of Miracles, particularly related; and of the Fathers Disposition to Rebellion and Credulity.*

THE Reader has now before him, what Dr. *Middleton* has urged concerning the several Sorts of Miracles; together with such Replies, as appear to me to be fair, easy, and reasonable ones. Which of us has given the genuine State of these Gifts during the Second and Third Centuries, it is now left to every learned, impartial, and candid Enquirer

to judge and determine. As to the *succeeding Ages*, I must leave the Defence of them to other Hands; tho', if some of their Claims should be indefensible, this will not prejudice those I have endeavoured to vindicate and support. I think, I have the Pleasure to find this Gentleman here (tho' indeed, Page 159. he reasons after a quite different manner) agreeing with me. He owns, that Suspicions "will be stronger still against all P. 123:
" who succeeded them [the Fathers considered] especially after the Empire became Christian; when—a general Corruption, both of Faith and Morals, began more openly to infect the Christian Church." If there be any Force in this, then we may, without knowing precisely when Miracles ceased, conclude, that the lower we go, the less Credit is due to the Accounts of them; and that, tho' all the Accounts of succeeding Miracles were false, (which yet I will not assert, nor do I believe) those, we have already examined, may be allowed to have been real. Both ought not to be put upon a Level, as this Gentleman has himself furnished us with a Reason, why some should be suspected more than others.

We are next told of "a Circumstance, common to all the Writers, who attest them, as well in the earlier, as the later Ages; that tho' their Assertions be strong, their Instances are weak — This the
" Reader

“ Reader can hardly fail to observe, from “ the Examples already produced.”—I am very willing to leave ‘nem to his Judgment. And perhaps he may not be inclined to think, that the particular Facts are so absurd and idle. Neither do I remember, that any one of them is produced by the Fathers of the

P. 123. Second and Third Ages, *in Proof of what they affirm*, as our Author is pleased to assert; but they are mentioned occasionally, and separately from the general Claims. So that, were a few of them weak, they would not hurt the Credit of these Claims, nor furnish any Objection against them.

To these Instances, the Doctor adds one or two more. The First is from the Account the *Church of Smyrna* gives of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, which has always been highly esteemed by the Learned of all Communions. At such a Time, it is, I think, no-way improbable, that God Almighty might think proper to fortify the Minds of His Servants by some extraordinary Displays of His Divine Power in favour of His holy Religion. This *Narrative* was drawn up by undeniable Witnesses, with a truly primitive Simplicity of Style. These profess themselves to have been present, and to have seen the Facts they relate; and we cannot suppose them influenced by any Temptation to falsify or deceive. They could have no Views of present Pleasure or Advantage.

P. 124.

§. 15.

And

And therefore, unless there is some gross and flagrant Absurdity or Contradiction in their Account, I cannot see, why we may not, indeed why we ought not to, give it Credit. Let us then run it over. First, it is said, that “there came a Voice to him from Heaven, saying, *Be strong, Polycarp, and quit thyself like a Man.*” This Circumstance, I presume, has nothing in it unworthy of Belief. — “The Flame, forming a kind of Arch, — encompassed the Body of the Martyr; — who stood in the Midst of it, not as if his Flesh were burnt, but as Bread that is baked, or as Gold or Silver glowing in the Furnace.” But this Comparison of the *Bread* is not mentioned either by *Eusebius* or *Ruffinus*. And all that is meant, is, that the Body was not consumed by the Flames; the Reflexion of which from it would, in that Case, of course, give it a Brightness, very naturally expressed by the glowing of any bright Metal. The Miracle also God might be pleased to permit for the Conviction of the Heathens, and the Encouragement of the Christians. — “We smelled a sweet Smell, as of Frankincense, or some rich Spices.” — Neither will this weaken the Authority of the Relation; not even tho’ it should be granted, that there was nothing miraculous in this single Point. The *Enquirer* indeed translates the Words, “So sweet a Smell issued from him all the

Vid. not:
Usser. ap.
Coteler.

P. 125;

T

“while.”

Vide
Wake,
§. 15.

“ while.” But the Originals are, Ευωδίας
τοσαυτης ανιελαβομεθα — *Tantum quippe fra-*
grantiam odorabamur — The whole Sense
of which is, as I have given it above. — On
the Executioner’s thrusting his Sword into
him, “ there came out of his Body a Dove,
“ and so great a Quantity of Blood, as quite
“ extinguished the Fire.” The only Mi-
racle here, is the Circumstance of the *Dove*;
which is extant neither in *Eusebius* nor *Ruf-*
finus, mentioned neither by *Jerom* nor the
Menæa of the *Greek Church*: Which Mr.
Dodwell, Archbishop *Wake*, Dr. *Cave*, and
other learned Critics, think not genuine;
which *Le Moyne* accounts for by the Mistake
of a single Letter in the Original, reading
for εξηλθε περιττερα, εξηλθ’ επ’ αριτερα; and
so making it, in Effect, agreeable to the Re-
lation in *Eusebius*. The Authority for this
Wonder of the *Dove*, is Archbishop *Usher*’s
Manuscript; which is later than *Eusebius*,
and so of far less Authority than this Histo-
rian. And yet this Interpolation, or Mistake
in transcribing, tho’ so easily disproved or
corrected, is represented by this Gentleman
as Part of the original Epistle; for no other
Reason, that I can perceive, but that he
thought it made for his Design of throwing
some Contempt on this very antient and ve-
nerable History. — Lastly, “ it appears from
“ the Sequel of the Narrative, that there
“ was Fire enough still left, to consume the

“Body to Ashes.”—The original Words are, *ἔσθις αὐτὸν ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ πυρὸς ἐκαύσεν* — And Archbishop *Usher* observes, that, instead of *τοῦ πυρὸς*, *Eusebius* reads *ὡς ἐδοῦς αὐτοῖς*; and that neither Reading is in *Ruffinus*, or the *Fasti Siculi*. So that the Original certainly says no more, than that *the Centurion burned the Body*. But, that it was in the Fire, *which had been extinguished*, is not said. Neither does it seem fair to suppose the *Church of Smyrna* could, in the Compass of a few Lines, so directly contradict and forget themselves; especially as there can be no Difficulty in supposing, that a *new Fire* might have been lighted for this Purpose.

Dr. *Middleton* saith, Page 125. that “all the oldest Copies still extant, from which Archbishop *Usher*, *Cotelerius*, and *Ruinart*, published their several Editions, retain this Passage,” relating to the *Dove*. This appears very pompous. And yet, tho’ I would not be positive in such a Point, I cannot find, that there is any other *Greek* Copy extant than that which *Usher* published; which Dr. *Wake* calls the *Barrochian* Manuscript, and of *which*, he says, *Cotelerius’s is but a Copy*. And as to *Latin* Translations, none of these shew, that this Circumstance was originally in the *Greek*, or before *Eusebius’s* Time. Had it been there thus early, we had most probably found it in this *Historian*.

P. 126.

But it is said, that he " might probably
 " drop it for the same Reason, for which
 " Mr. *Dodwell* and Bishop *Wake* also pro-
 " fess to have dropt it; viz. for the sake of
 " rendering the Narrative *the less suspected.*"

But, 1. These great Men profess no such Reason, but rather the contrary. The former, as appears from the Quotation we have from him at the Bottom of this very Page, was influenced by a better Reason: He thought it *supposititious, because neither Eusebius nor Ruffinus had it*; and he would not derogate from the Credit of genuine Writings, by mixing *supposititious and suspected ones with them.* And even the English Reader would, in the same Place, have found the same thing to be true of the Archbishop, if this Gentleman had not stopt short in his Quotation of him, and concealed, under a commodious &c. the following Sentence: *And indeed, besides the Strangeness of the Adventure, I cannot think, had any such thing truly happened at his Death, that not only Eusebius should have been ignorant of it, but that neither St. Hierome, nor Ruffinus, nor the Menæa of the Greek Church, should have made the least mention of it.* Ubi supra.

2. If the Reason, which the Enquirer supposes, had influenced these learned Writers; it is still less probable, that *Eusebius* should have been influenced by it. He lived in the Fourth Century, when Relations of Miracles

Miracles were favourably received, and little suspected. Nor could he lose any Credit by transcribing this Account of *Polycarp's* Martyrdom as it came to his Hands: Nor could that Account probably be confuted in this Point, so long after the Fact happened. Therefore, since *Eusebius* omits this Article of the *Dove*, I cannot think he read it in his Copy. Nor yet do I think, that he read *ἐπ' ἀριστέρα*. For neither are these Words in him: And why should he leave them out? And however ingenious this Conjecture be, the Change that it must make is somewhat greater, than that of One Letter. For the Word *καί*, before *πληθος*, which *Eusebius* has not, must have been also interpolated. And, besides, *ἐξηλθεν*, not *ἐξηλθ'*, is the usual way of writing in Prose, when a Vowel follows. On the Whole then, I think the Circumstance of the *Dove* not a Mistake in transcribing, but an Interpolation made after the Time of *Eusebius*. It might not however have been a Forgery, which would not have served any great Purpose, but a fabulous Tradition, first put in the Margin of some Copy of the Epistle, and thence inserted by some ignorant Scribe in the Text. — However this be, the Authority of the Piece we have been considering, and the Miracles recorded in it, I conceive, are sufficiently vindicated. And I wish our Author would seriously reflect on the high Opinion, which

that great Critic *Scaliger* had of it : Which Archbishop *Wake* thus translated, altering a little the Order of the Sentences. The Original may be seen in *Usher's* Notes. *He knew not any thing in all Ecclesiastical Antiquity, that was more wont to affect his Mind; insomuch that he seemed to be no longer himself, when he read it; and believed, that no good Christian could be satisfied with reading often enough this and the like Accounts of the Sufferings of those blessed Martyrs, &c **

There will be no Occasion to enter into a minute Discussion of the Two next Wonders related by *Eusebius*. The First, the Conversion of Water into Oil by the Prayers of *Narcissus*, is said to have happened above 100 Years before he wrote: Which must necessarily detract much from his Testimony, as he tells us, that he wrote from *oral Tradition* †, than

* In the Margin of this Page we are told, that the Destruction of the Martyrs, “ after a vain Profusion of Miracles, “ was always effected at the last.” But I cannot see, how this derogates from the Authority of the Histories. These Miracles were no-way vain. They shewed, that God was able to have preserved His Saints, if He had thought fit; and they tended greatly to encourage other Christians, by demonstrating, and making it plain to their very Senses, that tho’ God, for the wisest Reasons, no doubt, permitted them to be grievously persecuted; yet, in the midst of all their Torments, He was pleased to bear Testimony to the Truth of their Doctrine, and the Innocency of their Characters. So that Miracles at Martyrdoms might be very credible, tho’ the Martyrdoms were effected at last. See also Mr. *Dodwell's Free Answer*, p. 37.

† ΟΙ ΤΗΣ ΠΑΡΟΙΚΙΑΣ ΠΟΛΙΤΑΙ ΩΣ ΕΚ ΠΑΡΑΔΟΣΕΩΣ ΤΩΝ ΚΑΤΑ
ΕΙΔΩΧΗΝ ΑΔΕΛΦΩΝ — ΜΗΜΟΡΕΥΟΥΣΙ. H. E. l. vi. c. 9.
And

than which nothing well can be more fallacious. So that this is far from being parallel to the Relations, which I have undertaken to vindicate : And yet neither has Dr. *Middleton* offered to confute it. — The other Instance does not appear to be represented as *strictly* miraculous. The Word *παράδοξον* does not imply this, but only something *wonderful, extraordinary* ; as it was thought to be for the Stones, and Streets, and public Places, to be dropping and wet, when the Sky was remarkably clear and serene. The Historian indeed relates the common Talk about this, that it was occasioned by the horrible Barbarities and Impieties then practised by the Heathens : Which Observation, whether right or wrong, is none of his own ; nor does he give the Account in general, as what happened in his Presence. Here again he might *perhaps* have been deceived by Reports. And therefore neither is this Case similar to the others. And we may call the Miracle in question, without disbelieving the other Relations of Miracles in the primitive Church.

I pass over several Pages without any Remark, as they relate to the Fathers of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries ; which are without the Limits of my Design. But in

And Mr. *Dodwell* owns this. *Hæc e traditione, non e scriptis, Eusebius.* Diss. in Iren. 11. §. 49. Where the Reader may see his Defence of this Miracle, which Defence the *Enquirer* takes no notice of.

Page 156. we are told of "a total Change
 " —both of Principles and Practice—be-
 " tween the Church when persecuted, and
 " when established."—The early Christians
 declared themselves loyal to the Govern-
 ment; the latter prayed for the Destruction
 of such Emperors as disturbed them. Still
 this is nothing to the Miracles of the Three
 First Centuries; nor, one would think, any
 thing to the Dishonour of the early Fathers.
 Yet this Gentleman seems even from hence
 to pick up an Article of Accusation against
 them; and, joining all the Popish Writers,
 concludes, "that it was not the want of
 P. 157. "Will, but of the Power only to rebel,
 "which made the primitive Christians so
 "patient under the persecuting Emperors,
 "and particularly under *Julian*, &c." But
 can any thing well be more unjust, than thus
 to suspect the Truth of Mens Professions,
 and to deny, that they were patient and pas-
 sive upon Principle, for no other Reason,
 than because, in another Age, their Suc-
 cessors betrayed greater Impatience? And
 this Argument comes still worse from Dr.
Middleton, as he cannot insist upon it, with-
 out contradicting what he had said in the
 former Page of a Change of Principles;
 whereas, according to this Supposition, the
 Principles of them all are laid down as the
 same. However, it is scarce reconcileable to
 human Nature, but that Christians must have
 made

made some Attempts of Resistance before, if they had thought it allowable. According to the Accounts of *Tertullian* and *Pliny*, they did not want Numbers sufficient to be formidable *. An Opposition could not have made the Condition of many of them worse than it was. Such as were in immediate Danger would have had some Chance to escape.—As to *Julian*, it is true, that the Christians treated him with great Indignation and Resentment. But then it must not be concealed, that they had met with from him very peculiar Provocations. Their Case was different from that of the first Christians. And *Julian's* Oppressions and Cruelty were greatly aggravated beyond those of the first Persecutors. “Is there no Difference,” saith a lively Writer †, whose Words however I do not altogether adopt, “I appeal to all the
 “ World, between being turned out as Sheep
 “ among Wolves, which was the deplorable,
 “ but unavoidable Case of the first Christians,
 “ and being worried by one of their own
 “ Flock? Has a Man no more Right nor Pri-
 “ vilege after he is naturalized, than when
 “ he was a Stranger or Alien, or accounted
 “ an Enemy? Do not the same Laws, which
 “ forbid Men to invade other Mens Rights,

* *Titus* Bishop of *Bosra* in *Julian's* Time is said, by Dr. *Cave*, to have written to him in the Name of himself, and his Clergy, “testatus est Christianos in ea urbe Gentilibus numero haud inferiores esse; quiescere tamen illos, et nihil seditionis meditari.” *Hist. Lit. V. 1. p. 228.*

† *Julian*, by *Sam. Johnson*, p. 71, 73.

“ enable

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† *Julian*, by *Sam. Johnson*, p. 71, 73.

“enable

“ enable them notwithstanding to maintain
 “ and defend their own? These are the plain
 “ and palpable Differences between the State
 “ of the first Christians, and of those under
 “ *Julian*.--So that the same Men, who would
 “ quietly have submitted to the Laws, un-
 “ der a *Nero* or *Dioclesian*, do nevertheless
 “ pursue *Julian*, as if he were a Midnight-
 “ Thief, or a Highway-Robber.”—Besides,
 even under *Julian* they did not rebel, how-
 ever they might pray: And who knows,
 whether they might not pray first for his
 Conversion, and only conditionally for his
 Destruction? As we learn from the same
 Author, who cites an *Act* of *Philip* and
Mary for it, that the *Protestants* in *Queen*
 P. 96, 97. *Mary's* Days prayed, “ that God would turn
 “ her Heart from Idolatry to the true Faith,
 “ or else to shorten her Days, or take her
 “ quietly out of the way.” Which Petition,
 if not strictly defensible, is in such Circum-
 stances natural and pardonable.

This Gentleman, Page 159. says, that our
 rejecting the Miracles of the Fourth Century
 “ must needs give a fatal Blow to the Credit
 “ of *all* the Miracles even of the preceding
 “ Centuries.” I will hope, that those of
 the first Age are not intended to be included
 in this Blow, tho' surely they ought to have
 been expressly excepted, or else the Expres-
 sion is very inaccurate, and may tend to mis-
 lead an hasty Reader.—As to the Argument,
 it has often fallen under our Consideration. I
 have

have shewed, that Dr. *Middleton* has himself furnished us with a Reason, why the latter Fathers are more to be suspected than the early ones *. It is not enough to say, that the Fathers of the Fourth Century were as wise, and as honest, at least, as those, who went before them. The Circumstances of the Times may make a Difference: Different Opportunities of Enquiry and Conviction may be also supposed. In short, it is very unjust to condemn any one, for the Faults of another; or to reject his Testimony and Authority, because others, in Appearance as capable, have related things, which we suspect the Truth of. In a word, every Character must stand upon its own Bottom: So indeed must every distinct Relation. And the Evidences of these can only be judged of, and compared together, by a particular View of all their Circumstances. The Falshoods or Errors of one Age can be no real Objection, and ought never to be mentioned as an Objection, against the Credit of any other, either before or after it. To conclude thus, in the gross, is neither free Enquiry, nor

* I am somewhat surpris'd, that Dr. *Middleton* has not once considered any of the Advantages, which Mr. *Dodwell* has mentioned as belonging to the Miracles of the Three First Ages, above the subsequent ones: Among which, besides some I have set down, are the Power and Diligence of the first Adversaries of Christianity; the Opportunity the Lapsed had of discovering any Impostures; the public manner of working them before Adversaries, nay, in Opposition to them. See *Diff. in Irenæum*, ii. §. 62.

sober Reasoning, but the Effect of Prejudice, and the Source of Error.

We hear, at every Turn, of the Credulity and Superstition of the early Ages. And once
P. 186. we are told, that these " had been trained up
" by them [the Fathers] to consider *the Im-*
" *possibility of a thing, as an Argument for*
" *the Belief of it.*" Is it not natural to expect the fullest Proof of so very general and extensive an Assertion? Will a single Sentence, from *any one* Father, make good this heavy Charge against *them all*? And yet all the Proof the Doctor has produced, is a single Passage of *Tertullian*; a Writer of an hard and crabbed Style, who appears to have delighted in Antitheses, and pointed Sentences. Suppose we could not have explained this Place in any good Sense, nothing could be more unfair, than the Use and Application of it, which is made in the *Enquiry*. But, really, there is no great Difficulty to see the just Meaning of it, if we attend to the Context and Reasoning. We may see from hence, that it is no Proof at all of the Point it is brought to prove. The Passage is,
De carne Christi, §. 5. " The Son of God was crucified: It is no
" Shame to own it, because it is a thing to
" be ashamed of. The Son of God died:
" It is wholly credible, because it is absurd.
" When buried, He rose again to Life: It is
" certain, because it is impossible." We see here a false Wit, and forced Turns; but
cannot

cannot fure imagine, that the Writer intended to be understood strictly according to the Letter. The Death and Resurrection of our Lord were not things absurd and impossible; nor did *Tertullian* think them so. He represents them as such, merely according to the Notions of vain and conceited Men, such as the Heretics he was disputing with, and not in Reality. They are here called absurd and impossible, in the same Sense as St. *Paul* ^{1 Cor. iii.} calls *preaching* of the Gospel *to them, that* ^{18.} *perish, Foolishness*; and says, *If any Man among you seemeth to be wise in this World, let him become a Fool, that he may be wise*: A Text quoted but a little before by *Tertullian*. But, for a more distinct Explication of the Passage, I refer the Reader to Mr. *Dodwell's Free Answer*, p. 99, &c.

We may now attend our Author in viewing the Recapitulation, which he has given ^{P. 188.} us, of the chief Points he has insisted upon; not one of which, we may venture to say, he has been able to prove. It is false, that "the Gift of *raising the Dead* is affirmed "only by—*Irenæus*;" for *Papias* has also mentioned it; and this Gentleman has not refuted either of their Accounts. It has not been shewn, that *Theophilus* did not know, nor believe it. The Gift of *Tongues* is mentioned by *Irenæus*, who no-where complains of his wanting it himself. The Gift of *expounding the Scriptures* appears to be only the

the Doctor's Imagination. He has not proved, what he here asserts, that it "is reckoned commonly with the rest, and claimed in particular by *Justin Martyr*." The Gift of *casting out Devils* is affirmed by *all* the Fathers of the Second and Third Centuries, in the fullest manner possible. If it had no Effect in some Cases, it had in many others. But where has the Gentleman shewn, that "it could not work a perfect Cure in any?" This is notoriously false; nor do I remember, that he has once attempted to prove this by any Authority. And, in such a Case, his bare Word will go for nothing. As to *other Diseases*, the Application of Oil will not shew it to be so much as probable, that the Cures of them were not miraculous. Here were none of the Heathen Arts used; no sort of Fraud appears; nor could the Assistance of *Demons* be pretended. Lastly, the Gift of *Visions and Trances*, tho' of a more private Nature than the others, might be of some Service in propagating the Gospel; however, was of excellent Use in ordering and governing the Church, and in comforting, directing, and fortifying, private Christians. They did not owe their Credit to Heretics and Enthusiasts. Far from being "always suspected by the Sober and Judicious," of which no Proof has been offered; some, that deserve this Character most, as *Cyprian* and *Dionysius*, claimed them. Nor have we had any

any Reason given to convince us, that they
 “fell into utter Contempt;” unless perhaps
 with this Author, and some of his Turn,
 whose unreasonable Contempt will no-way
 hurt their Credit with any fair or candid
 Persons.

C H A P. VIII.

*Objections against the Scheme of the Enquiry,
 and the Doctor's Answers, considered.*

THE fifth and last Head is employed P. 190.
 in refuting Objections. I shall not
 interfere with the Province of any of the
 Gentlemen, who have appeared against the
Introductory Discourse; and shall only take
 notice of some general things, which this
 Gentleman has here urged, and which may
 be thought to affect the Credit of the Fa-
 thers of the Three First Centuries.

SECT. I. *Relating to the Canon of Scripture.*

I Am very glad to find him declaring so
 directly and openly for the Authority of
 the Books of the New Testament; and hope
 all his infidel Readers and Admirers will con-
 sider well this Part of his Book, and no
 longer

longer insist upon the Credulity, and supposed Forgeries, of some of the Fathers, as Objections against the Scriptures, or any Book of them, being genuine and canonical.—It is also a Satisfaction to me to find, that this Gentleman has spared the *Apostolic* Fathers, and allows them a due Authority. For if these had been likewise as ignorant, credulous, and corrupt, as their Successors are represented; I apprehend, it would be harder to vindicate the Authority of the Canon; it might then have been thought, that they might have been easily imposed upon, and might not have been able, or not inclined, to examine and distinguish between Forgeries, and the real Works of the Apostles and Evangelists. And if this could be made appear of the *first Bishops and Martyrs* of the Christian Church, it would have been still more probably the Case of the *common People*, to whose Care and Custody such Writings were not so immediately committed. And thus the original Reception of them might come to be suspected, from the Unskilfulness, or Unfaithfulness, of those, who first received and transmitted them down:—Whereas, as there passed above Forty Years between the writing of the last Books of the *New Testament*, and the flourishing of *Justin Martyr*, the first Father, whom this Gentleman has thought proper to attack; here will be Time enough for them to gain good Foot-
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ing and Credit in the Church; before he wrote, they must have got into *many* Hands, and been very *widely* dispersed; and it would have been impossible afterwards to destroy, or materially to corrupt, them. In this Light, then, we need not mix the Authority of Scripture with the Question before us.— And yet, I dare say, it will be a Pleasure to every Friend of Revelation to find even the Fathers of the Second and Third Century, who were the first, who have left us Writings of any Length; whose Works contain great Numbers of Quotations from Scripture; and who have been often appealed to by learned Men, in Proof, that our Scriptures are in the main pure and uncorrupt; to find *these also* cleared and defended from gross Ignorance, and wilful Fraud, and their Credit and Authority established so, that their Judgment and Veracity may be depended upon in Matters of Fact: This must be owned to strengthen and confirm our Belief of the Genuineness of the Books of the *New Testament*, as received among us, and to be a great Advantage gained over all their Adversaries and Opposers.

The Pleasure, which I received from the last Declaration, is, I own, somewhat abated by the next Paragraph. Here again, as P. 192, before in the Preface, the Gentleman seems not regardful enough of the Consequences of his Notion; and intimates, that

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he is determined to abide by the Character he has given of the Fathers, and cannot help thinking the same of them, even tho' the Authority of Scripture should be *really weakened* thereby. If this be not his Meaning, I own, I do not understand him. And if this be his Meaning, it appears to be very extraordinary. Suppose I could not disprove the Truth of his Accounts; yet I should be very loth to put this on a Level with the Truth of the Genuineness of Scripture. The

Pref. *Enquirer* owns his Opinion to be not only *new*, but *contradictory* to the *common* and *prevailing* one. This should imply something doubtful and uncertain at least in it. And, if it clashed with the Credit of the *New Testament*, which has been so long and well established, a serious Believer would hardly insist upon it; would be inclined rather to suspect and give it up. And such an alarming Consequence must, in my Opinion, overthrow it at once. Here then we have an unwarrantable Stress laid on a novel disputable Scheme; in doing which this Gentleman, I trust, will meet with very few Followers in the Christian World: Most will sooner think him mistaken or deceived, even tho' such Errors should not appear, than throw away their Bibles, or once distrust their Authority.

What I have said on this Point is not intended to reflect on the Sincerity of this Gentle-

Gentleman's Belief of the Scripture, but only to animadvert on what I cannot but think an immoderate Zeal for a favourite Opinion. A Man may not be afraid of Consequences; and yet not be inclined to push any Point, any new one especially, so far, as in the least to hazard the Truth of Christianity to support it, or to continue a Plea, which might possibly hurt and injure this Truth.

Lest this Gentleman should complain of a Misrepresentation; it will not be improper to set down some of his own Words, and to expostulate a little farther about them. "If we should allow the Objection to be true, it cannot in any measure hurt my Argument." The Objection was, that "by the Character, which *he had* given of the antient Fathers, *the Authority of the Books of the New Testament*—will be rendered precarious and uncertain." It might have been expected, that he should have allowed, that if this would have been the Consequence, his Argument and Scheme could not stand. A just Concern for the Scriptures, and the Religion revealed therein, which he professes to teach, one would think, might have influenced him to declare himself ready to renounce any Notion, as soon as it could be shewn, that it is injurious to the Authority of these sacred Books. But to look coolly on at so destructive an Effect, to express no Concern for the supposed Ruin of Christianity,

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anity, by the means of his Work, and only to say, *Who can help it?* is a Degree of Luke-warmness, which cannot be excused; which can please none but Unbelievers; and which, as I believe it is hitherto without Example among Christians, so I hope it never will be imitated.

SECT. 2. *Of the public Appeals and Challenges of the Apologists.*

WE are now to consider what this Gentleman has urged in Answer to the *public Appeals and Challenges*, which the *Apologists* made to the Heathen Powers, to see, with their own Eyes, the Reality of some miraculous Facts they relate. This has deservedly the highest Stress fixed upon it. They could not more strongly shew their Sincerity and Assurance of the Facts. Some Years since I endeavoured to sum up this Evidence; and shall beg Leave to repeat some of the Words I then used, in order to see, whether the Doctor has offered any thing, which may induce me to alter my Sentiments. * “ The Cases
“ are represented as very numerous: Their
“ Enemies were called upon to examine into
“ them: They were called upon in *contro-*
“ *versial* Writings, and in solemn *Apologies*:
“ The Truth of Christianity was in a man-
“ ner put upon it, as a certain and undoubted

* Essay towards vindicating the literal Sense of the Demoniacs, p. 114, &c.

" Test: This Fact was of such a Nature, as
 " to be, in the highest manner, reflecting on
 " the Heathen Religion, and derogatory to
 " the Honour of their *fancied Deities*. If
 " it could therefore have been disproved,
 " would not they, who were so very zeal-
 " ous for these, have gladly taken hold on
 " such an Occasion to have vindicated them,
 " and laid so just a Reproach on Christians?
 " — There was need enough of the Fa-
 " thers being exact and correct in their
 " Apologies. No less than the Lives and
 " Safety of all the Christians, or of many
 " of them, depended thereon. Let us
 " consider a Set of Men, holding a Faith
 " contrary to the Profession of the civil
 " Governors, who thereupon misrepresented
 " and reviled it; and, when this would not
 " do, attempted to stop the Progress of it
 " by Persecution and Torments. Several of
 " these Sufferers, at once to vindicate their
 " Religion and Characters, and to obtain
 " an End of their Miseries, present solemn
 " Addresses to the very chief of their Ene-
 " mies: All of them agree in asserting a
 " Fact, as common and well known; dare
 " the others to look into it, and make Trial
 " of it; put the Success of their Cause up-
 " on it; and make a voluntary Offer of
 " forfeiting their Lives, if it should fail.—
 " And can we, in these Circumstances,
 " think such a Fact false? Could Men ever

“ shew a fuller Assurance of the Truth of
 “ any?—But perhaps the Apologists were
 “ —Madmen. No: These very Works
 “ contradict such a Supposition: They are
 “ written in the Spirit of Truth, Soberness,
 “ Calmness, and Decency. Besides, the Event
 “ of them abundantly justifies their Under-
 “ standings, as well as the Truth of their
 “ Assertions. Madmen, we may be sure,
 “ would not have been listened to: And
 “ any Falshood would have been far from
 “ doing Service; would certainly have ag-
 “ gravated the Malice of their Enemies, and
 “ given these a real Handle to afflict them
 “ still more: Whereas many of those *Apo-*
 “ *logies quenched the Violence of the Fire of*
 “ Persecution, and obtained *Rescripts* and
 “ *Decrees* in favour of Christianity. We
 “ may therefore receive, for undoubted
 “ Truths, whatever Facts they all advanced
 “ in this manner: We may depend upon
 “ their Care in making Assertions, the Falsh-
 “ hood of which they would soon have an-
 “ swered with their Lives.”

The Reader will, I hope, excuse the
 Length of this Extract. What is here said
 relates in some measure to other Miracles,
 as well as that of casting out Devils. The
 Gentleman, with whom I was then con-
 cerned, made no Reply to these Reasonings.
 And I must own, on a serious Review of
 them, I cannot see, that they are capable of
 any

any just and solid one. We saw before, that the *Enquirer* endeavoured to account for the *Challenges* of the Christian Apologists by supposing a Number of People kept in Pay, and disciplined, by the *Exorcists*. The Absurdity of this was then shewn. And, indeed, this Gentleman seems here sensible of it. For he deserts the Plea, and offers another not well consistent with it. Let us examine this, and see whether he has now succeeded any better.

The Substance of the Scheme is, that it was difficult to make their *Apologies* known to the World; that the Gospel was so despised by the generality of the better Sort, during the Three first Centuries, that they scarce ever enquired into its Pretensions; that the principal *Roman* Writers misrepresent the Christians, as a Set of despicable Enthusiasts; that, notwithstanding the Apologies, their Condition, generally speaking, continued much the same, till at last they were established by the Civil Power; and that they were constantly insulted by their Heathen Adversaries, as a stupid, credulous, impious Sect, to whom all the public Calamities were constantly imputed; that Men of Figure cannot be supposed to have at all regarded the Writings of so despised a Sect, not recommended by any Elegance of Style, and discouraged by the Government; much less, that the *Emperor* and *Senate* should

P. 193.
&c.

take any notice of these Apologies, or even know, that such were addressed to them; no more than the Government now would pay any regard to an Apology for the *Methodists*, *Moravians*, or *French Prophets*; that, besides, before Printing, it was difficult to publish and disperse Books; and therefore, that the *Apologies*, addressed to *Emperors* and *Senates*, were for many Years concealed and unknown to the Public, among the Faithful only, who were often exposed to capital Punishment, and their Books to be burnt, if they discovered them *.

This is the whole Strength of this Answer. And, in general, we may say of this Supposition, that it is a downright Contradiction to the best Histories and Accounts we have of those Ages and Transactions; which leave us no room to doubt, whether the Christian Apologies were presented, or not; and which intimate, that they often met with a most
 L. iv. c. 9, favourable Regard from the *Emperors*. *Eusebius* has given us, in Terms, Two Copies
 23, 26. of Decrees made by *Adrian* and *Antoninus* to prevent the Christians from being molested

* See Mr. Dodwell's *Free Answer*, p. 112, &c. where he argues from Dr. Middleton's own Concessions and Reasonings, that the primitive Christians had some Influence and Regard in the Heathen World; enough to present their Apologies, and to procure them a Reading: As also, p. 115. where he observes very appositely, that "the Parliament has under Consideration, at this very time, an Address from the *Moravian Brethren*:" Whose Petition, I think, they have since complied with.

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merely on account of their Profession. So that the Reader is left to judge, whether it be right for him to believe the Testimonies of these Writers, as to such notorious Facts, which happened in or near their own Time, or any new Hypothesis, how ingenious soever, which this Gentleman has contrived, to ward off a present Difficulty. However suspicious he may think himself obliged to be, with regard to any *miraculous* Relation; yet, what should hinder him from believing such *natural* and *probable*, as well as *plain* and *open*, Occurrences? Can it be thought, that the early Writers would thus forge *Rescripts* of Princes, and palm them upon the World for genuine?

Farther, is it probable, that the Christian Apologists would ever have taken Pen in hand in Defence of their Cause, if they had thought it *possible*, that after all their Labour and Pains, their Defences would never be seen or examined by those, to whom they intended to inscribe them? Their undertaking this Task itself shews, that they apprehended no Difficulty in presenting them, or at least getting them presented. Naturally they could not fail of endeavouring this. Nor do we ever hear of any Complaints of any Disappointment or Repulse, which they ever met with; which, among other Instances of Partiality and Injustice which they represent, we should certainly have heard of, had

had this been the Case. Nor were the later Apologists discouraged by any ill Success their Predecessors had met with.—No doubt but they would secure some Method of offering their Books to those, for whose Perusal they wrote and designed them. Nor can we think this so very difficult, tho', perhaps, we may not be able to point out the particular Ways they took to do it *.

That the Gospel had strong Prejudices to encounter at first setting out, is but too certain. That *Suetonius*, *Tacitus*, and *Pliny*, greatly misrepresent and abuse the Christians, is also true. That the Christian Apologists afterwards complained of gross Partiality and Injustice shewn them by the Heathens, we allow.—But what then? Will it follow, that their Writings were never presented to, or regarded by, the Persons, to whom they were addressed? This, as I just now ob-

* *Eusebius*, H. E. l. 4. c. 11. observes, that *Justin Martyr* had his Habitation at *Rome*, when he wrote his Apology; and mentions that as the Occasion of his writing it. And we may find Proofs of its having a good Effect on the Emperor, and influencing his Rescript, in the new Edition of *Justin*, Par. 1742. *Præf. Par. iii. c. 5.* where the Apology and Rescript are compared very exactly together; and the Author shews it probable, that this had a View to the other. And *Justin* himself, in a Passage cited in the *Enquiry*, p. 199. shews himself fearless of any Danger to himself, from thus openly declaring and defending his Religion. *Tertullian's Apologetic* was translated into Greek, *Euseb. l. ii. c. 2.* Which does not look like being "concealed and unknown to the "Public;" as this Gentleman represents the Apologies to have been, p. 199.

served,

served, is contrary to plain Fact. And the Consequences also farther shew the Falseness of such a Conclusion. We know, that, strong as the Prejudices against the Christians were, they by degrees vanished. Time and Enquiry got the better of them. The Heathens came to have more just and favourable Sentiments of our Religion. And, not long after the *latest* Apologists flourished, it was established even by the Civil Power.—And is it not extremely probable, that some Share of the Merit of this is due to the Apologies and Defences, which had been published? These probably put People, who were before careless and negligent to the last Degree, upon a near Examination of the Doctrines and Practices of Christians. And it can be no Wonder, that this turned out to their Credit; and that idle and groundless Rumours, on which the Accusations of them were founded, should give way and fall before it.

Both *Pliny* and *Tertullian* mention the great Numbers of Christians, of all Ranks and Orders, in their respective Times.—To weaken this Testimony, which stood in the *Enquirer's* Way, and spoiled his Supposition, he observes, “ that their Accounts “ were given from the Provinces of *Bithynia* “ and *Africa*, where the Dignity of even “ the most eminent was but very little “ considered or respected in the great Republic of *Rome*.” But it is amazing, how he

P. 195,
Note.

he could so lightly pass over *Tertullian's* Testimony. The Sentence is well known, and has been very often cited. "Hesterni sumus, "et vestra omnia implevimus, urbes, insulas, "castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra "ipsa, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum, "forum." And is this an Account of the Number of Christians in the Province of *Africa only*? The *Palace*, the *Senate*, the *Forum*, had Men of our Religion belonging to them. The Dignity of these must have been somewhat respected. And we may learn from hence, how easy it was for the Apologists to get their Works presented, and their Cause known, even to the *Emperors* and *Senates* themselves.

The supposed Case of any *modern Fanatics* is by no means parallel to that of the primitive Christians. To make it so, several Circumstances must be added. We must imagine these *really* persecuted and destroyed in great Numbers: We must imagine them capable of giving the strongest Evidence of the Truth of their Persuasion, as well as of the Innocency of their Conduct: We must imagine them to have some Friends in the *Parliament* and the *Council*: We must imagine some of the chief of them successively drawing up humble and modest Representations of their Case, and inscribing them to their Superiors; declaring their Tenets, their Numbers, their Peaceableness, and

and Loyalty ; shewing the Injustice of their Sufferings, and praying a speedy End of them.—And can we imagine, that any wise and mild Government would shew no Regard to such Vindications and Petitions? Is it probable, that these should never reach the Ears of such inquisitive Men as *Antoninus Pius* and *M. Aurelius* were, even tho' they were not presented to them in Person? Is it not quite consistent with the Characters of *these* Princes, to give a patient and favourable Attention, and an equitable and merciful Answer, to such important Requests?

Before the Art of Printing was invented, it was indeed more difficult to publish and circulate Books.—But how does this affect the present Argument? Will it follow from hence, that the Apologies were not published and presented? Great Numbers of Copies might not be taken. But that *some* were, is certain, or else we had never heard of them. They were confessedly in the Hands of Christians. And it is not to be supposed, that these could not, or, on so interesting an Occasion, would not, willingly, bear the Expence of writing out so few Transcripts, as would be sufficient for the Perusal of the *Emperors*, &c. to whom they were addressed.

The last Plea is, that the Publication of the Apologies would have exposed the Christians often to capital Punishment; and that the Writings, “instead of being read,
“ were

“ were generally ordered to be burnt”— Had this been the Case, it would not have discouraged the primitive Christians, or at all abated their Zeal and Piety. Thus *Justin Martyr* says in the very Place this Gentleman cites, “ that the utmost your Malice “ can do, is to kill us; which will not hurt us, “ but will bring eternal Punishments on yourselves.” However, I do not remember one Instance of any *Christian* suffering for presenting an *Apology*, or of any *Magistrate* throwing such into the Fire, instead of reading it.

And thus, I hope, the Authority of the *Appeals* and *Challenges*, which the Primitive Apologists make, stands safe and unshaken by any thing here urged. And I need only repeat, that it is hardly possible to conceive stronger Proofs of the Reality of Miracles being worked in their Days.

SECT. 3. *Martyrdom a Confirmation of any one's Testimony.*

THE next Particular, which the Gentleman enquires into, is that of *Martyrdom*. This has always been esteemed an Evidence of Sincerity. And, indeed, a stronger cannot be imagined. If we suspect the Integrity of a Man's Testimony, who dares even to suffer Torments and Death, rather than deny what he thinks the Truth; whose Veracity can we depend upon in any Case?

Case? Such were several of the Witnesses, whom we appeal to in the present Question, and whose Relations this Gentleman has thought proper to call in Question. It was therefore necessary for him to give this Point a Consideration: And it will be but fair to attend him, so far as the general Subject is concerned.

The Point he proposes to shew is, "that P. 200.

"this venerable Name made no real Difference in the personal Characters of Men, nor ought to give any additional Weight to the Authority of a Christian Witness."

This is very strong, and, I believe, contrary to the general Sense of Mankind. So far as Sincerity, and a Desire not to deceive others, is a necessary Qualification in a Witness; so far must Martyrdom, being the highest Proof of this Qualification, be an high and eminent Confirmation of his Testimony. The Question therefore is, whether we can reasonably think such Persons capable of forging, falsifying, or knowingly and wilfully concurring in any Fraud, or Design to deceive and impose upon the World? Will not their dying Martyrs for the Truth acquit them at once of such a Charge?

In Support of his Assertion, the Doctor takes notice of the "various Motives— which would naturally induce the primitive Christians, not only to endure, but even to wish and aspire to Martyrdom."

Obsti-

Obstinacy of Temper, and Contempt of Death, which Mr. *Dodwell* thought they might learn of the *Galileans*, and which *Tiberianus*, the Governor of *Syria*, objected to them*; Glory and Reputation, the Honour of Martyrdom, or the Authority, which such Confessors, as escaped with Life, enjoyed afterwards.—But were we to look no farther than this, no serious Person can be-

* *Josepbus*, *Ant. l. xviii. c. 1. §. 6.* Ed. *Hudson*, speaks of the Contempt of Death, which the Sect of the *Galileans*, i. e. the Followers of *Judas of Galilee*, had, but not the Nation. And Persons of any District of *Judæa* might have been of that Sect: Which, however, the Apostles were far from being, tho' they were *Galileans* by Nation. Nor doth *Tiberianus* appear to have meant the *Christians of Palestine*, as Dr. *Middleton* understands him, p. 201. but Christians in general, then commonly called *Galileans* by their Enemies. Nor doth he say more of their Contempt of Death, than is said of other Christians. So that this Point of *Galilean* Obstinacy is misrepresented by our Author. And this I think more needful to observe, lest it should be applied to *Jesus of Nazareth*, and his *Galilean* Followers. By their Example, indeed, it must be owned, the primitive Christians were influenced.—With regard to Glory, the other supposed Motive, Dr. *Middleton* has borrowed the Main of what he saith about it from Mr. *Dodwell*, *Diff. Cypr. 12.* whom he has in a manner translated. And therefore surely he ought to have taken notice of what he saith there, §. 11, 12, 13. in Diminution of the Strength of that Motive with them; which is in a great measure the same with what I have said above. He begins §. 9. with these remarkable Words. “Ergo gloriam hic suspicant buntur habere locum, qui veræ martyrum gloriæ, qui religioni Christianæ detractum cupiunt.” Therefore they, who desire to detract from the true Glory of the Martyrs, and from the Christian Religion, will suspect, that Glory in this Case had some Place, i. e. any considerable Influence over the Minds of the Sufferers. And he concludes the 13th Section with saying, “inde consequetur graviora esse querenda, quam gloria incitamenta, quæ Christianos ad martyria impulerunt.”

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lieve such Motives alone, sufficient to tempt Men to undergo those numberless dreadful Cruelties and Barbarities, the Account of which cannot be read without Horror, which the primitive Christians suffered. We must know very little of human Nature, to suppose them influenced and actuated to such a Piety and Resolution, by Principles so mean and uncertain, as Stubbornness and vain Glory *. Nay, it appears to be great Injustice to them, to consider these Incitements, as having any Power over them, or contributing to their glorious Conflicts and Struggles. Nothing but the especial Assistance of The Divine Spirit, the firm Belief of the Christian Doctrine, and the lively Hopes of Immortality, could carry them through these.

I cannot but make two or three Remarks, by the way, on some Points which this Gentleman seems to have misrepresented. He goes too far, p. 202. in saying, that the Confessors had Authority to restore lapsed Christians to Communion, "on what Terms they thought fit." This his own Quotation from *Cyprian* shews. "Mandant *De Lapsis*,
"aliquid Martyres fieri? Si iusta, si licita,
"si non contra Ipsum Dominum, a Dei sa-

* Mr. *Dodwell* distinguishes between vain Glory, and a Regard to Reputation; and allows, that the Martyrs shewed nothing of the former, but aimed only at the Praise of God, their Consciences, good Men, and the Church. See *Diff. Cyp.* 12. §. 14.

“cerdote facienda sunt.” We see here Terms laid down; and that, according to this Father, they were to be obliged in nothing but what was lawful, just, and innocent. And that he gives Directions to the Martyrs themselves, may be seen from his tenth Epistle.

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Again, the Doctor appears to bear too hard upon the Characters of some antient *Confessors*; when he represents *Cyprian* as complaining of their being puffed up with Pride on account of the Title of *Martyrs*, and giving great Disturbance to the Peace and Discipline of the Church. The Epistles of St. *Cyprian*, here referred to, say nothing like this. On the contrary, in one of them he tells the *Martyrs* and *Confessors*, that he heard, that they were pressed by the Impudence of some, and their Modesty suffered a kind of Violence, viz. to petition for the Restoration of the Lapsed to the Communion of the Church. “Audio — impudentia vos quorundam premī, et verecundiam vestram vim pati” — Is this the Language of one, who complains of Pride?

In the next Page we are told, “that the Souls of ordinary Christians were to pass to their final Bliss through a Purgation by Fire.” As this is not explained, common Readers may apprehend, that the Fathers believed such a Purgatory, as is one of the Tenets of the Church of Rome. And therefore, to prevent such a Mistake, Notice should have

been

been given, that the Purgation mentioned by *Lactantius*, as appears from the Citation from him, was very different from the Popish Purgatory, and was something to be suffered at the Day of Judgment. *Iustos cum judicaverit, etiam igni eos examinabit.* And, as to the *Prison, Torments, and Purgation by Fire*, mentioned by *Cyprian*, as the Portion of the lapsed Christians, these are interpreted by Protestant Writers, and I think justly, of the Ecclesiastical Discipline of Penitents. See Archbishop *Wake's* Discourse of Purgatory, printed in the *Preservative against Popery*; where he observes also, that *Rigaltius* approves this Interpretation.

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Tit. viii.
p. 122.

To return: By what I have said before, I would by no means be understood to accuse the *Enquirer* with intimating, that the low Motives mentioned were the *only* ones, upon which the primitive Martyrs acted. He expressly adds, what he calls *the principal Incentive*, “the Assurance, not only of an “Immortality of Glory — but of extraordinary and distinguished Rewards,” of a complete Pardon, and of an immediate Enjoyment of Paradise. — This is true; but still I cannot see, how it lessens the Credit of their Testimony. Knaves and Cheats cannot be supposed to aim at *these* Rewards; which if they believe, they must know, that such Iniquity will deprive them of. Such Hopes and Expectations, and the suffering Tor-

ments for the sake of them, are very weighty Presumptions of a good Conscience, and a good Character; and cannot but recommend a Person highly to our Esteem and Confidence. We cannot easily distrust him.

How far they thought in those Days, that “the World was near its End,” we need not enquire. I do not see, how such a Notion would make them more eager after *Martyrdom*; because, be this true or false, Martyrs were thought, as this Gentleman has just told us, intitled to enter upon an *immediate* Possession of their high Reward. And, as to the single Circumstance of their hoping to be so soon “Assessors and Judges with Christ Himself,” such Hopes were inconsistent with any fraudulent Design; nor could possibly make a bad Man desire *Martyrdom*; nor indeed could prevail more, than the general Hopes of the Crown of Glory.

P. 204.

We are told of another Notion, which was sufficient of itself “to efface all the Terrors of *Martyrdom* ;” that, under all their Torments, “the Martyrs were miraculously freed from all Sense of Pain, nay, felt nothing but Transports of Joy”—And that they were supported by some extraordinary divine Consolations, I think certain enough. Without such, human Nature must have fainted under the Afflictions they endured. And I can easily allow, that the Prospect of such Comforts had its Share in encouraging them

them to suffer. Yet still it cannot be proved, that it was generally believed, that *all the* Martyrs were freed from Sense of Pain, and especially not in the three first Centuries. But, however, how does this take off from the additional Weight of their Credit and Testimony? This is the Point we are to keep in View, and this does not appear affected hereby. Could bad Men, who had been concerned in inventing, or wilfully promoting, Delusions and Forgeries, expect any of these heavenly Comforts? Nor does such Expectation detract from the Character of the Martyrs. It is itself a most heroic Act of Faith and Confidence in God.

The last Motive this Gentleman mentions, is, “the Scandal of flying from Persecution, and the Infamy which attended the “lapsed Christians; so as to make Life hardly “supportable to those, who through Fear of “the Rack, and a cruel Death, had been “tempted to deny their Faith — which Topics, when displayed with Art and Eloquence by their ablest Teachers, were sufficient to influence the Multitude to what “Pitch of Zeal they pleased” — Now, not to say, that these very Teachers shewed their *Sincerity*, as well as *Eloquence*, by taking the Lead, and setting an Example of suffering; what is there in all this, that can lessen the Authority of the Sufferers, or shew, that this is not heightened by their Martyrdom?

Is it at all probable, that artful and cunning Men would be swayed by the Fear of Infamy to hazard their Lives? That good Men might be roused and alarmed by the Prospect of an immense Happiness set before them, is easy to be conceived. But who can think, that bad Men would be thus influenced? That mere Shame, and the Fear of Disgrace, would drive them into Tortures and Death? — Besides, is it so certain, supposing them to have been affected by Shame, that the Principle would operate *this Way*? Was there no Scandal to be dreaded from the Heathen World, and which they were sure to incur by Sufferings? Power, Authority, and worldly Advantages, were certainly on the Side of their Persecutors. Contempt and Infamy from this Quarter were the Portion of the Persecuted. The way to Honour and Rewards lay open to the Deniers of their Religion. And can we suppose, that any but good Men would assert it at the Expence of Life itself? Would not all others rather be afraid of the Disgrace, which attended Suffering, than that, which attended falling from their Duty? If a Man does not act on the best and highest Principles, 'tis easy to say, which way this of Shame will carry him. He will be content to save his Life, and to escape whole and sound, though with some Disgrace, which for private Persons might not be so very great, if they continued among the Heathens especially;

ally; and which he may also hope to outlive, and to wipe off by his future Conduct. And we may add, that such, as returned back to the Church, suffered so much, that they gave a like Proof of their Sincerity that the Martyrs themselves gave.

Notwithstanding then these several Inducements to Martyrdom, which have been here reckoned up, we see, that this is a proper *Test* of the Characters of Men; and that it is a distinctive Sign of their Sincerity and Truth: And, indeed, so it proved in those Times. For, however strong the Encouragements may now appear, yet they were far from influencing *all*. In those Days of Trial, the Unsettled, the Wicked, the Hypocrites, the Weak and Timorous, flinched and deserted; as in all such Cases it is natural to suppose they would do.

But “ the Heretics also had their Martyrs, P. 209.
 “ — as well as the Orthodox.” This all History is said to inform us. But *Eusebius* only is cited: And he does not appear to me to say any such Thing. From some Writer of the second Century, whom he does not name, he gives us a long Extract concerning *Montanus*, &c. in which we have a Challenge to produce “ any of his Followers, who H.E.L.V.
 “ had been persecuted by the *Jews*; or who C. 16.
 “ had been killed by wicked Persons; or
 “ who had been taken and crucified for the
 “ Name of *Christ*; or of any Woman, who
 “ had

“ had been scourged or stoned in the *Jewish*
 “ Synagogues. — Εἴτι τις, ὡ βέλτιστοι, τῶτων
 των ἀπο Μονίανθ καὶ γυναικῶν λαλεῖν ἀρξάμε-
 νων, ὅς τις ὑπο Ἰουδαίων ἐδιώχθη, ἢ ὑπο παρα-
 νομῶν ἀπεκλινῆθῃ; οὐδεὶς· οὐδὲ γε τις αὐτῶν κρα-
 τηθεὶς ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος ἀνεξαιρωθῇ; οὐ γάρ
 οὐν· οὐδὲ μὴν οὐδὲ ἐν συναγωγαῖς Ἰουδαίων τῶν
 γυναικῶν τις ἐμαρτυρώθῃ ποτε, ἢ ἐλιδιοβολῆθῃ;
 οὐδαμοσε οὐδαμῶς. So far then this Author
 is plainly and fully against the Reality of any
 Martyrs amongst the *Montanists*. The same
 Author afterwards considers the Boasts,
 which these Heretics made of their Mar-
 tyrs, and the Conclusion, which they drew
 from this Pretence in their Favour. He says,
 that “ this is not at all truer than their other
 “ Pretences. For some of the other Here-
 “ sies have, or boast of having, many Mar-
 “ tyrs; but we do not therefore assent to
 “ them — The Followers of *Marcion* say,
 “ that they have many Martyrs of Christ
 “ among them; and yet they do not in
 “ Truth confess Christ Himself.” Το δε εἴτιν
 ἀρα, ὡς εἰκε, πάντος μάλλον οὐκ ἀληθές·
 καὶ γὰρ τῶν ἀλλῶν αἵρεσεων τινες, πλείστους
 οὐσους ἐχουσι (*forte legendum* * αὐχουσι) μαρ-
 τυράς· καὶ οὐ παρὰ τοῦτο δε ποῦ συγκαταθῇ-

* *Valesius's* Translation strengthens this Conjecture. *Plu-
 rimos se habere Martyres prædicant*. And a little before this
 Word is used, πρὸς τὰς αὐχεντας ὡς ἀρα πλείους καὶ αὐτῶν
 μεμαρτυρηκόσες εἰεν. And it is visibly the Writer's Intention
 through the Whole to deny the *Montanists* the Title of
 Martyrs.

σομεθα

σομεθα — Μαρκιωνισται καλουμενοι πλειους
οσους εχειν Χριστου μαρτυρας λεγουσιν· αλλα τον
γε Χριστον αυτον κατα αληθειαν ουχομολογουσιν.

If the flight Emendation I have offered, be
received, here is no Testimony of any real
Martyrs among the Heretics. And indeed,
as these are placed on a Level with the *Mon-*
tanists, whose Claims he had before so directly
denied, this most probably is the Sense of the
Passage. And the Argument requires only,
that the Heretics laid in their Claims or
Boasts of having Martyrs, but were never the
more to be regarded or believed—Then fol-
lows the Passage quoted in the *Enquiry*.

“ When any of the Church, who had been
“ called to Martyrdom for the true Faith,
“ accidentally met with any of the *Cataphry-*
“ *gian Heresy*, who are said to be Martyrs,
“ they even then no way join them; and,
“ having no Communion with them, sepa-
“ rating from them, finish their Course.”

Επειδαν οι επι το της κατα αληθειαν πιζεως
μαρτυριον κληθεντες απο της εκκλησιας τυ-
χωσι μετα τινων των απο της των Φρυγων
αιρεσεως λεγομενων μαρτυρων, διαφερονται τε
προς αυλους, και μη κοινωνησαντες αυλοις τελειουν-
ται. In this Sentence it is obvious to observe
a plain Opposition. The Men of the Church
are said to have been *called to Martyrdom*,
the *Montanists* to have been *said to be Mar-*
tyrs; intimating very plainly the one to be
real, and the other only *pretended*. So that
this

this Passage makes against Dr. Middleton's Supposition, and not for it.

I cannot but observe farther, that he mistranslates the Passage. He renders the last Words *to refuse all Communion with each other*; whereas it was the *Catholics* only, who refused Communion with the *Montanists*, not allowing them to have been *real Martyrs*, and detesting the Spirit by which they acted.

The *Enquiry* also refers us to the Eighteenth Chapter of the same Book; but neither will this answer his Purpose. There is indeed mention made in it of two pretended Martyrs among the *Montanists*. One was *Themison*, who, when he was in the Communion of the Church, had been in Chains for the Faith; but by a large Sum of Money had bought his Liberty; and, being understood to have deserted his Profession, and therefore hated by all Christians, turned *Montanist*, and gloried in the *Title of Martyr* *.

Ο μη βατσας της ομολογιας το σημειον, αλλα πληθει χρηματων αποδεμενος τα δεσμα. Here, while he could be said to be a Martyr, he was no Heretic. And surely such an Hypocrite cannot be compared with the antient Martyrs. Nor will their Credit sink with his—The next Instance is still worse. *Alexander* was punished for Thefts, and other Wickedness, and not for the Name of *Christ*, from whose Faith he had before

* Vid. Cave. Hist. Lit. quoted in the Notes. Ed. *Reading*.
aposta-

apostatized. But, in order to gain his Release through the Interest of some Christians, who had Power with the Judge, he pretended to them, that he suffered for the Name of Christ.

—This is the Account we have from *Eusebius* and *Ruffinus*; and of *such* Martyrs Heresy is welcome to make its Boast.

These are all the Authorities the Gentleman has offered; and sure they are very insufficient — But suppose he had proved his Point: Let us suppose, for Argumentation-sake, that some of the antient Hereticks had Courage and Resolution enough to undergo Martyrdom for what they thought to be the Truth: Would it follow from hence, that they were *insincere bad* Men, or that Martyrdom is not the *best Trial and Proof* of the Honesty and Integrity of a Man's Heart? So far from it, that I think we must conclude, on the other hand, that, notwithstanding the Errors, which these Persons entertained, and fell into, they thoroughly believed the Cause, for which they suffered. However credulous or deceived themselves, they had no Fraud, no Design to deceive others. And thus far therefore an additional Weight is added even to *their* Authority — On the Whole, supposing an Equality in other respects; equal Abilities, equal Opportunities of knowing the Truth, equal Care in searching into it; the Testimony of a Martyr, *as such*, must have the Preference above that of any

P. 209.

any other. It is more surely to be relied upon, because we can have little or no Reason to suspect or doubt his Veracity.

But “ among the orthodox Martyrs themselves—there were many [proud, contentious, drunken, and leud] as St. Cyprian complains, who, after they had nobly sustained the Trial of Martyrdom, and escaped with Life from the Torments of their Persecutors, yet by a petulant, factious, and profligate Behaviour, gave great Scandal and Disturbance to the Discipline of the Church.” I own that some, who had been Confessors, are taxed with gross Faults. But this Father never once insinuates, that they were thus guilty *before their Confession*. And, unless this was the Case, no Conclusion can be drawn to the Discredit of the Testimony of *Confessors*, and much less of *Martyrs* in general. The best of Men are liable to fall, and have at all times need of strict Caution, and a watchful Guard over themselves. But can this affect their Authority and Veracity, while they continued upright? Confessors might sometimes be exposed to spiritual Pride, and be taken in this Snare of the Devil, after they had gloriously shewn their Sincerity, and proved the Strength of their Faith: And they might from hence be led into other Acts of Wickedness. But surely, when they made their Confession, we must esteem them

to

to have been honest and good Men; or else I cannot see, that we can have Reason ever to esteem any such.

The Gentleman takes Occasion to let his Readers know the Difference between the Name of *Martyr*, and that of *Confessor*. P. 211.
Note.

This Point does not appear of much Importance. Neither am I sure, that these Titles were not sometimes used *promiscuously* *. However, his Account of the Confessors seems imperfect. *Rigaltius*, in the Place, to which he refers us, mentions these, not only as such, as, after having made Professions of their Faith before the Magistrates, were barely committed to Prison, which is the *Enquirer's* Description of them; but as Men, who had suffered Banishment, or the Loss of their Goods, for the Name of Christ.

“ Confessor dicatur, qui interrogatus a præfide, vel proconsule, alicujus seculi potestati-
“ tibus, Christianum se esse professus est;
“ vel ob Christi nomen exilium, carcerem,
“ et bonorum suorum damna pertulit.” I mention this, *obiter*, only as an Inaccuracy. Not that I wholly agree with *Rigaltius*, who appropriates Torments to the *Martyrs*. For, though the same Persons are sometimes indiscriminately styled either *Martyrs* or *Confessors*; yet it is plain from St. *Cyprian*, that these last had endured Torments. And

Not. ad
Cyp.
Ep. 8.

* Vid. Suicer. in voce *Μαρτυς* where he cites Nazianzen as calling the Confessors *ζωλὰς μαρτυρας*.

there.

therefore, where these Titles are used accurately, and in Contradistinction to each other, I rather think, that *Death* was the great Circumstance, which made the Difference; and that none were thus *properly Martyrs*, but such *, as had resisted even unto Death; whereas all others, however persecuted, were in the Class of *Confessors*. This was the Sense of those mentioned by *Eusebius*, who had been tortured under *M. Aurelius* and *L. Verus* †.

The Remainder of this Note is taken up with representing a Difference of Opinion between the Times of *Polycarp* and *Tertullian*, about the Lawfulness of withdrawing from Martyrdom, or flying from Persecution. What has this to do with the present Question? How does it detract from the Veracity of Martyrs? *Tertullian*, especially after he turned *Montanist*, was a warm Man, and apt to be too rigid, and to carry some Points too far. This has always been acknowledged. And if we suppose his Sentiments on the present Point an Instance of his intemperate Zeal, or a Consequence of this Change, I know no bad Consequence, which we need apprehend from the Concession. *St. Cyprian's* Conduct and Plea have been both considered at large. And, I trust, it has not appeared, that his Temper, or the Temper of

* Vid. Suicer, *ομολογηται*.

† H. E. 5, 2. Vid. Enquiry, p. 202.

that Age in general, was so *enthusiastic* and *visionary*, as it is here again represented. I cannot, however, but observe, that even this Gentleman here intimates, that St. *Cyprian's* Retreat was agreeable to "the Precept and Example of our Saviour; the Practice of His Apostles; and the Evangelical Martyrdom of St. *Polycarp*." So that this Father could be under no sort of Necessity to pretend a Divine Vision, and immediate Direction from Heaven, in order to excuse and apologize for himself. To which we may add, that *Tertullian* was not followed in the austere Opinion mentioned above, by the eminent Writers of his Time. Dr. *Middleton* in this very Note owns, that *Clemens Alexandrinus*, who flourished with him, differed from him intirely. And I see no Reason to think, that *Clemens* had not the Sense of the Generality with him.

This Gentleman has thought proper to conclude his Reflections on the Case of Martyrdom, with a most remarkable Paragraph, which is absolutely irreconcilable with the Whole that he has offered on this Subject.

"It is not my Design to detract in any manner from the real Merit and just Praise of those primitive Martyrs, who with an invincible Constancy sustained the Cause of Christ, at the Expence of their Lives." P. 212.
Whatever his *Design* was, which is best known to himself, and with which an Opponent has nothing

nothing to do ; if his *Arguments* had had just Force, *they* have a plain Tendency to detract from the Credit of those holy Men. The Purport of what has been urged, is, that, besides the Hopes of Immortality, there were several low and unworthy Motives, such as Obstinacy, vain Glory, and Fear of Shame, which may be thought to have influenced the first Christians, and sometimes to have animated even bad Men to endure Martyrdom; and that even to those who suffered it from the Prospect of gaining everlasting Happiness, it gave no additional Weight to their Evidence. Now, if this was the Case, how can we prove, that any primitive Martyrs were not of this Number, thus animated, and thus bad? or that the best of them are to be credited? Whenever their Authority is urged, the Answer, according to this Scheme, is ready : They might be, for ought we know, led by false Zeal, Obstinacy, &c. And therefore their Goodness, Truth, and Sincerity, cannot be depended upon. And what Reply can any one make, on the Foot of this Gentleman's Suppositions?

However, I readily accept this Concession, which is better late than never ; as also that which immediately follows, which I recommend to the Consideration of all our Readers.

“ It is reasonable to believe, that, generally speaking, they [the primitive Martyrs] were the best Sort of Christians, distinguished

“guished by their exemplary Zeal and Piety;
 “and the chief Ornaments of the Church in
 “their several Ages.” If the Doctor doth
 not comprehend Sincerity and common Ho-
 nesty under the Character of Piety; he makes
 a Satire on the primitive Martyrs, under the
 Colour of a Panegyric: And surely he must
 comprehend them, as in another Place he
 admits *Martyrdom to prove Sincerity*. And
 therefore I cannot look on the Sentence just
 cited as less than a Retractation. Then, I hope
 they were free from all Suspicion of Craft,
 above every Design or Desire to deceive, and
 deserving to have their Words taken, where
 it does not from other Considerations appear,
 that they were imposed upon themselves.
 And how then can we reconcile this with
 the Position we had above, that “this ve-
 “nerable Name made no real Difference in
 “the personal Characters of Men, nor ought
 “to give any additional Weight to the Au-
 “thority of a Christian Witness?”

P. 214.

Several of the Writers, whose Testimo-
 nies we have appealed to for the Truth of
 Miracles in their Days, are Part of the *noble*
Army of Martyrs and Confessors. And it
 gives us, methinks, but a melancholy Idea of
 those early Times, as well as a strong Proof
 of the Power of Prejudice, to think, that
 these Persons, allowed to be “the best Sort
 “of Christians, distinguished by their ex-
 “emplary Zeal and Piety, and the chief

Y

“Orna-

“Ornaments of the Church in their several
 “Ages;” in fine, that these, than whom no
 more honourable Martyrs after the Days of
 the Apostles, and their Contemporaries, can be
 produced; were notwithstanding guilty, as
 we have seen them represented, of concur-
 ring in Frauds, if not inventing them, and
 designedly imposing upon us by Lyes and
 Fictions. If this be the just Character of the
 greatest and best Men of those Ages, what
 shall we think of the generality of Chri-
 stians?

It is but just, that the Charge of misre-
 presenting should fall, where it is due. And
 it is matter of Pleasure, that the Persons,
 who seem most inclined to distrust the pri-
 mitive Martyrs, should find themselves at last
 obliged to allow them the Praise of Integrity.
 We own, what this Gentleman adds, “that
 “they were subject still to the same Pas-
 “sions, Prejudices, and Errors, which were
 “common to all the other pious Christians
 “of the same Age.” Yet still it is incon-
 sistent with real Piety in any Age, to forge,
 to falsify, or wilfully to misreport.

“My sole View therefore is, to expose
 “the Vanity of those extravagant Honours,
 “and that idolatrous Worship, which are
 “paid to them indiscriminately by the
 “Church of *Rome*; and to shew especially,
 “that the Circumstance of their Martyr-
 “dom, while it gives the strongest Proof
 “of

“ of the Sincerity of their Faith and Trust
“ in the Promises of the Gospel, adds no-
“ thing to the Character of their Knowledge,
“ or their Sagacity ; nor consequently, any
“ Weight to their Testimony, in Preference
“ to that of any other just and devout Chri-
“ stian whatsoever.” Now, not to insist
upon the Impropriety of mentioning these as
a *sole View*, which are evidently *two distinct*
Designs, to be prosecuted in different Ways;
I answer, First, That if the Gentleman had
set out with telling us, that these were his
only Intentions, he might have saved him-
self and his Readers some Trouble ; and he
might have urged other Arguments much
more applicable to his Purpose. Idolatry is
more easily to be guarded against, and dis-
proved, by other Topics both from Reason
and Scripture, than by shewing, that bad
Men might be sometimes induced by bad
Motives to suffer Martyrdom. The Church
of *Rome* is not likely to pay much Attention
to such Reasonings as these. And I know
no one, either *Papist* or *Protestant*, who has
ever thought, or is under any Temptation
to think, that Martyrdom alone will always
evince a Man’s Knowledge or Sagacity. And
yet, it certainly is the highest Argument of
his good Faith and Sincerity ; and therefore
adds greatly to his Credibility as a Witness.
Nor is it once to be imagined, that they, who
have a sincere Faith and Trust in the Pro-

A Vindication of the

mises of the Gospel, would willingly impose upon us. The Persuasion of these Principles must be our best Security against such designed Frauds.

2. 'Tis obvious to observe the great Difference, which appears in the Entrance and Conclusion of the Observations on this particular Point. *Then*, Dr. Middleton proposed to shew, that Martyrdom "made no real Difference," *i. e.* as he must mean, evidences none, "in the personal Characters of Men:" *Now*, "it gives the strongest Proof of the Sincerity of their Faith and Trust in the Promises of the Gospel"—*Then*, "it ought not to give any additional Weight to the Authority of a Christian Witness:"—*Now*, it only "adds nothing to the Character of their Knowledge, or their Sagacity; nor consequently, any Weight to their Testimony, in Preference to that of any other just and devout Christian whatsoever." So that it should seem, that Knowledge and Sagacity are the *only* Qualifications in a Christian Witness; or, that every Christian Witness must *necessarily* be just and devout; the first of which is contrary to Reason, and the last to Experience.—To solve these appearing Contradictions will call for all the Doctor's Ingenuity and *Acumen*. Conscious of far inferior Abilities, I shall not so much as attempt it.

3. But I cannot dismiss the Point, without

out making a Remark on the last Sentence cited; which implies, that Martyrs are no more credible, than any other just and devout Christian. There seems to be a Fallacy lurking here: A just and devout Christian, we know, will not deceive. And therefore supposing, that we are sure, a Witness is such, we may so far depend upon him, *whether he be a Martyr or not*. But, considering the Corruption and Hypocrisy, which prevail in the World, and which often put on the Semblance of Justice and Devotion; it is not always so easy a Matter to acquire a sufficient Knowledge of the real Character of a Witness. And here we cannot possibly have any better Help than the Circumstance of Martyrdom. This therefore gives a real Weight to any one's Testimony, preferably to that of all others, as it gives the *greatest* Assurance, that he is an honest, good Man, incapable of Fraud or Craft.

SECT. 4. *How far the Enquiry tends to set aside the Faith of History.*

THE last Objection this Gentleman sets himself to answer, is, that to reject the unanimous Reports of the Fathers, will destroy the *Credit of all History*. The Gentlemen, who are more immediately concerned in this, can want none of my Assistance to vindicate them. And therefore I shall not break into their Province; but take notice

only of a few things, which directly relate to the Authority of the Miracles which I have been defending.

P. 214,
215. To speak my own Sentiments, there appears to me to be some Force in the Objection. I am very far from pleading for the receiving *all* the Notions of our Ancestors indiscriminately, or without due Examination. This Point, tho' here confounded with the Matter of the Objection, has really nothing to do with it. The Faith of History in general, and the false Opinions of our Forefathers, are as distinct Things, as can be conceived. We may reject the one, and yet be very tender of destroying the other *.

Neither do I think, that we are under any Necessity of admitting all the Relations of the Fathers. There are great Differences between them. A proper Enquiry and Judgment even here has its Place. Some may reasonably be rejected: We may think, that some Wonders were trifling or accidental, or

* If the Doctor's Design here was to insinuate, that it is as unreasonable to condemn his Scheme on account of its being a *mere Novelty*, as it was in the Heathens to condemn the first Christians, or the Papists the Reformers; I answer, 1. That we do not condemn him altogether on this Account; and, 2. The Cases are very disparate, unless he can prove his Opinion to be a Point of Conscience; and shew, that the allowing the Miracles of the three First Centuries at least is equally big with Errors, both in Doctrine and Practice, as Paganism and Popery are; and prove his Scheme to be true, and agreeable to God's Will, as clearly and fully, as the primitive Christians and the Protestants have maintained and defended their Religion.

done at too great a Distance of Time, or Place, or both, or too secretly. And in these, and such-like Cases, the Relators might have been deceived themselves by false Accounts. A few Instances of such we have seen in the Course of these Papers—Other Miracles are not only of a more *important* Nature, of the same Kind with those mentioned in Scripture, but are represented, as having been done *openly* and *frequently*, in the *very Times* of the Relators, *sometimes* before their Eyes, *always* near enough for these to search into them, and to disprove them, if they had been false. —These Facts are reported by *several sober, serious, pious* Witnesses, who had conquered the Prejudices of Education; Men of Knowledge and Learning; to whose Labours the subsequent civil Establishment of our Religion seems, under God, to have been greatly owing; Men, who had no Temptations or Views of any present Pleasure, worldly Honour, or temporal Profit; and, lastly, who manifested their Sincerity and Faith by cheerfully suffering for Conscience-sake all Cruelties and Indignities, and even laying down their Lives with Patience and Courage, for the Truth of that Religion, they taught and maintained.

Such were the Works, and such the Authorities, which I have been defending. And let any cool unprejudiced Person, who attends to all these Circumstances, and compares what has been offered against them, *viz.*

the few Errors of Judgment, which these Fathers fell into; the few Mistakes which they were under, with regard to other Matters of Fact, which they could not have such Evidence of; the imaginary Suppositions of their being credulous, deceived, in Matters of common Occurrence, or of their being concerned in promoting a Fraud; with all the others, most of which are absolutely improbable, and every one of them unsupported by any Evidence: Let any such Person, I say, lay all these Things together, and judge for himself, whether greater Evidence can reasonably be desired in such a Case, than we have, that Miracles did not cease in the primitive Church, till after the End of the Third Century; and whether we can have stronger Grounds to depend on any other Accounts whatever, those of Scripture excepted, if we reject these. If Witnesses thus qualified are not to be believed, it is not easy to say, what merely human ones can deserve our Credit. A Man may sit down to the reading any Author with captious Dispositions, picking and chusing out of him, what Facts he will reject as incredible, and for which he will receive no Evidence whatever; and, on the other hand, what he will approve of or admit, tho' in no respect better attested. This Men may do, and I believe have often done. But surely this can never be called a fair Enquiry, or building any thing upon the Faith

Faith of History. It is humouring and indulging their own Prejudices and Fancies, and tends to render all historical Truth uncertain. The Credit of an antient Witness of Things probable depends altogether upon his Knowledge of the Facts he relates, and upon his Veracity. Where these may be justly supposed, we cannot desire nor demand any more. And if we will oppose his Testimony upon any Dislikes or Surmizes, or from any other Principle whatever, we have equal Right to oppose the plainest Testimony of another Witness; every one will have a Right to do the same that we have; and thus the Authority of History must soon be reduced to nothing—As therefore the primitive Fathers have been shewn to have the necessary and sufficient Qualifications mentioned above, this Consequence must follow the setting aside their Authority, and disbelieving all their Accounts of Miracles.

“ During the three First Centuries, the P. 216.
“ whole World in a manner not only doubt-
“ ed, but rejected the Miracles of the primi-
“ tive Christians”—By this, I suppose, the
Author means the *Pagan* World. And
this their Conduct was owing to a Neglect
of due Enquiry and Examination, and to an
unreasonable Prejudice against, and an ex-
travagant Contempt of, the Christians. And
the same Principles led them also to a Denial
of the Miracles of *Christ* and His *Apostles*
them-

themselves; I mean to deny, that these were worked by a Divine Power; for the Facts neither the Jews nor Heathens could deny, tho' they would not admit the Consequences. And in any other Sense the Gentleman will, I believe, find it very hard to prove, that they rejected the Miracles of the primitive Christians. 'Tis true, they did not enough attend to them; they did not draw the Use from them, which they should have done; for, if they had, they would have been converted to Christianity. But I never knew, that they openly opposed and confuted them; nor do we find, in any of their Writings extant, any direct Denial of the Truth of these Pretences and Claims. If there had been any such, this inquisitive Gentleman would, I dare say, have laid it before his Readers, as such a Counter-Evidence would have had more Weight, than all his Suppositions.

SECT. 5. *The Evidences for Miracles and common Events compared and considered.*

P. 217.

THE *Enquirer* again argues, " that the
 " History of Miracles is of a Kind to-
 " tally different from that of common
 " Events; the one to be suspected always
 " of course, without the strongest Evidence
 " to confirm it; the other to be admitted of
 " course, without as strong Reason to su-
 " spect it." Now granting, that Miracles should
 have

have stronger Evidence than other Facts; yet as they are Facts, the Evidence for them must still be the same *in kind* with that of all others. It must be Testimony. And I readily own, that *mere Honesty* will not be sufficient to intitle this to our Regard; and that a sufficient Knowledge of the Facts is also necessary. But it appears to be as easy to gain a sufficient Knowledge of these, as of any others of the most common Nature. In many Cases, a very little Experience and Discernment will help Men to judge of their whole Nature and Circumstances. No extraordinary Wisdom, no critical Abilities, are wanted to enable a Man to be a Witness of the miraculous Cures of Diseases, for instance. Common Sense, and common Observation, will be enough to guard against Impositions of this kind. And I must beg to repeat an Observation before made, that we find the most common and plain Persons chosen by God, to be vouchsafed the Honour, not only of seeing our Lord's Miracles, but of being appointed to testify and record them. Weakness is indeed liable to Impositions. But a Man must be extreme weak indeed, not fit to report and attest the commonest Event, who, when he sees a Man raised from the Dead, or healed immediately and miraculously of an old bad Disease, cannot distinguish the Hand and Finger of God, and cannot make a credible Report of such miraculous

raculous Works ; or who can easily mistake *the Craft of cunning Jugglers* for such Works as these. A Person must be credulous to a Degree of Madness itself, and not fit to be trusted in any Account he gives, who can be persuaded, that he sees such Facts openly done, which are not done. The *Extent of human Art*, or natural Powers, he may not indeed be thoroughly acquainted with. But this will not hinder him from being, in many Cases, *sure*, that no human Art, no natural Powers, can produce such and such mighty Works. It calls for no extraordinary Judgment to guard against Impositions in these Cases.

It may be proper here to put together the several Circumstances, which may at any time render a miraculous Relation justly suspected ; that we may know better what Degree of Evidence should attend it. If the Facts are not of an open public Nature, done plainly, or at least appearing in their Consequences plainly, before the Eyes of Men ; if they are worked only in the Presence of Friends, or prejudiced Persons ; if the Witnesses lived many Years after they were worked, and had no Opportunities of examining them, nor any Authority more than Hearsay and Report for them ; if they are of a trifling Nature, and unworthy of such a peculiar and extraordinary Exertion of Divine Power ; if the Occasions of working them evidently appear too mean and idle, and there
be

be no sufficient Reason for the Almighty's interfering; if they are produced in support of any known Error or Vice, or serve some secular End, and present Interest and Power; if they are overpowered and controuled by other and superior Miracles; if the Reporters of them wanted common Abilities, or common Integrity and Honesty, and may reasonably be thought deceived, or Deceivers — In all these Cases there will be room to suspect the Report. And by attending to these Circumstances, we may at any time be able to distinguish between Impostures and the Truth — We see, that the Qualifications of the Historians are much the same, whether they relate *miraculous* or *common* Facts; and that the Difference of Evidence requisite to assure us of those, relates to *other* Points. And surely both the Knowledge and the Honesty of an Historian and Witness may be fully depended upon; tho' it should appear, that in other respects, relating to Matters of *Opinion only*, or to *distant* Facts, he was credulous or mistaken — I will add, that not one of the Circumstances, which I have here mentioned, as destroying the Credit of a Miracle, appears in the Accounts of those I have defended.

SECT. 6. *Real Miracles not the less to be believed, on account of Pretences to them.*

P. 218.

THIS Gentleman observes, that “a Pretension to Miracles has, in all Ages and Nations, been found the most effectual Instrument of Impostors,” &c. Several Instances of this are produced at large from hence to the End of his Book—This indeed should put us upon our Guard, that we do not swallow all such without Examination, nor give hasty and implicit Credit to every bold Pretender. If we diligently try the false Miracles by the Rules I have put together, we shall find, that some or other of the Circumstances belong to them; and they will not be able to bear the Test, nor ought therefore to be put upon a Level with the Miracles of the three first Centuries—In general, we may say, that false Miracles are no sort of Arguments against true ones; any more than any false Reasonings, or other Pretences and Counterfeits, are against Realities. Nay, false Miracles in some measure bear Witness to the Authority of Miracles, and shew it to be the common Sense and Opinion of Mankind, not only, that there have been such, but that they are the best Means of Conviction, and the strongest Confirmation of a Revelation. Otherwise, Impostors would never have been encouraged to lay
Claim

Claim to them, nor pretended to imitate them. We may be very sure, that there never would have been any such thing as *counterfeit* Money in the World, if *true Coin* had not been valuable and current.

When therefore any Miracles are offered to our Consideration, it is not enough to set them aside, to put several false ones against them, and to insinuate, that it is unreasonable to receive the one, while we reject the others. This is no way of coming at the Truth; and the Plea will go farther than the *Enquirer* professes to intend; will hurt the Miracles of the Gospel, as well as those of the Fathers; or rather, to speak more properly, cannot, in the Judgment of any serious Man, affect the Credit of either of them. For this Gentleman, I believe, will find few or none of this Character to agree with him, that the Heathen Accounts of Oracles, Prodigies, &c. "may hurt in some measure the general Credit of Miracles." No more, than their Idolatry hurts true Religion; or their Mistakes in Philosophy are any Reason, why we should not study and embrace Philosophy in general.

Whatever Prejudice the Mind may receive from the View of Impostures and Pretences, still it is no better than a Prejudice, and ought to have no Weight with us. Every Miracle should rest upon its own Bottom, and stand or fall according to its own Evidence.

dence. To put antient and modern, Heathen and Christian ones, on a Level, is confounding Truth and Falshood together. The Differences between them are many and great. Some Wonders related by *Dionysius of Halicarnassus*, this Gentleman owns to have been "the Fictions of — Persons interested;" we may add, and also imposed upon such as were prejudiced and credulous to the last Degree, by the People in Power and Authority. The same is true of the *Romish* Miracles in general; and of those of the *Abbé de Paris*, which the Event also disproved, and of the *sacred Vial*, in particular. In these Cases, many of the other Marks of false Miracles, which I have given above, are likewise found. But which of their Relators gave that highest Proof of their Honesty and Sincerity, the laying down their Lives for Conscience-sake? The primitive Miracles had not only this Attestation, but were worked in Times of Persecution, when the civil Powers were their declared Enemies, and yet were called upon and challenged to examine into these Facts, and to see them. The Christians, in general, were Men of Simplicity and Integrity; were not byassed and actuated by any false Notions, of the *End* being sufficient to *consecrate the Means*, or of the Lawfulness of bad Actions, to support and propagate the Truth; had no temporal Interest to serve; do not appear to have been prejudiced, any farther

ther than every sincere Believer of his Religion is so; nor were their Accounts ever disproved, or their Cheat discovered *. Tho' therefore the Truth of History will not suffer by our Rejection of the Heathen or Popish Accounts; yet it cannot be so totally unaffected by our giving up at once all the Miracles of the First Centuries; unless we had stronger Arguments, than any hitherto offered, to justify such Conduct.

In some of the Cases, which this Gentleman has mentioned, he distinguishes between the extraordinary and the common Facts; admits the latter, and rejects the former. But he cannot be supposed to lay this down, as an *universal* Rule of proceeding. It will not universally hold with regard to the Heathen Accounts themselves. For tho', I believe, there was a great deal of Art, and Contrivance, and Fiction, in the *Prodigies*; yet it is easy to conceive †, that some of these might

* Ου βλομεθα ζην ψευδολογῶντες Just. M. Apol. 1.—Nec fas est ulli de sua religione mentiri. Tertul. Apol. 21.—Θεομαρτυς τε ημετερος συνειδωτος, βλομενε & δικ. ψευδων απασγελων, αλλα δια τινος εταργειας ποικιλης συνιστανειν την Ιησν θειαν διδασκαλιαν. Orig. cont. Cels. p. 35.

† "There might be some Cheats and Impostures in these Things; but a great deal was real Fact, wherein the Priests did not impose upon the People; but evil Spirits deluded both Priests and People, and brought the World to have an Opinion of their Divinity. This must be confessed, unless we will question the Credit of all History." *Reflections on Dr. Fleetwood's Essay on Miracles*, p. 383. the Author of which, who is supposed to be the present Bishop of Winchester, I presume, the Doctor will not rank among the Zealots, nor regard his Declaration as *Gant* only.

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A Vindication of the

have been above all human Power. The primitive Apologists, and *Eusebius*, who would doubtless have exposed the Fraud of them all, if they could have done it; yet, *in general*, take another Method, and ascribe their *Prodigies* and *Oracles* to the Assistance and Power of the Devils. And their Accounts have been, in the main, substantially, and I think, unanswerably, vindicated by a *French Gentleman* in his *Answer to Mr. De Fontenelle's History of Oracles*, wherein also *Van Dale's System*, and the *Remarks of le Clerc, Bayle, &c.* are confuted—However, the Rule just mentioned will by no means be justifiable, if we apply it to the Accounts of the early Fathers. Miracles are not only possible, but as easy to be proved as any other Facts; and are not therefore without Reason to be rejected, suspected, or explained away.

Translated into
English,
and published,
1709.

SECT. 7. *The Martyrdom of Polycarp farther vindicated.*

I Am sorry to find Dr. Middleton trying this Experiment with the venerable *Narrative of the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp*. The miraculous Part of this Account is related and attested in the same Manner, and by the same Eye-witnesses, as the Sufferings of the Bishop. What therefore can it be but Prejudice to say, “we have no doubt
“ of his Martyrdom; yet we may reason-

P. 220.

ably pause at the Miracles, which are said
 “to have attended it?” We must, I think,
 to make use of this Gentleman’s Words on
 another Occasion, *either admit them all, or*
reject them all; or else I do not see, how we
 can act either ingenuously, or consistently.
 Not that we need believe the spurious Cir-
 cumstance of *the Dove*, which is here again
 insisted upon, and which, according to the
Enquiry, “might have been conveyed” into
 the Wood, “probably by Design, in order
 “to be let loose at a certain Moment; as in
 “the Funerals of the *Roman* Emperors an
 “Eagle was always observed to fly out of
 “the Funeral Pile,” &c. Conveyed, Sir,
by whom? or *by whose* Design? You will not
 say the *Heathens* were concerned in this
 Fraud: And yet *these only* were concerned in
 preparing the Wood to burn the Martyr.
 And can it be therefore probable, that the
 poor persecuted Christians, supposing them
 dishonest enough to contrive such a Cheat, of
 which however a small Degee of Candour
 will acquit them, could have had Power
 enough to have accomplished it? In order to
 let the *Dove* loose at a certain Moment, in
 the Presence of their Adversaries, they must
 have had some Share of the Direction and
 Management of this Business. So that we
 see, what idle Suppositions are invented, and
 proposed as probable, purely to insinuate some
 Reproach on the first Christians. First, a

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Circumstance is insisted on, which is wanting in the earliest Copies, and disallowed by the greatest Critics; and then, this is accounted for, by supposing the antient Church guilty of an incredible Imposture, inconsistent both with their Character, and their Circumstances at that Juncture *.

And, lastly, we have here a most unaccountable Comparison between this Martyrdom, and the Funerals of the *Roman Emperors*: As if the Christians aspired to such Deification, as these did; as if a Fraud of this Nature, before the very Face of their Persecutors, was as easily concerted and performed by Men, who had far other Rewards in View, and quite different Subjects to employ their Thoughts, and could have no Hopes of succeeding in such a Design, or of escaping undiscovered by their malicious and watchful Enemies; as by Persons in Power and Authority, in Times of Peace and Tranquillity, when every thing concurred to fa-

* Mr. Jackson has much strengthened these Arguments, by the following Remark: "It was easy for an Eagle prepared for the Purpose to be let loose from a Funeral Pile, as soon as it was kindled, and began to blaze; but, in the present History, the *Dove* (if there was one actually concealed in the Wood) must have been preserved from Fire as miraculously as the Body of the Martyr. For the Pile had been a long time all in Flames, which were almost spent before the Dove is said to fly out; and so, by the Doctor's Solution, the Fire could neither burn the Dove, nor the Martyr; and, by this Concession, we have two Miracles instead of one." *Remarks*, p. 14.

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your and encourage their Contrivance; where even such as suspected it, did not dare to speak their Suspicions openly. Can these Cases be represented as any way similar? Or can we argue from the Certainty of the one, to the Probability, or even Possibility, of the other?

“ The Voice, pretended to come from
“ Heaven, was heard only by a few, and
“ that in a Time of such Hurry, in which
“ nothing could be heard distinctly.” How
this Gentleman came by this Intelligence, I cannot say. In the Copies printed by Cotelarius, it is said, *Τὴν δὲ φωνὴν τῶν ἡμετέρων οἱ παρόντες ἤκουσαν*, *vocem autem qui ex nostris præsentēs erant audierunt*, the Christians, who were present, heard the Voice. In Eusebius and Ruffinus, the Words are *πολλοί*, *plurimi*; but that these signify only a few, I never knew before. But, suppose there were but a few, who heard the Voice, will this discredit the Relation? It is plain, that this Voice was intended to encourage Polycarp himself. If he heard it, the End of it might be answered. And if but one or two, tho’ the original Words must imply more of those who joined in this Epistle, heard it also, surely they are sufficient Witnesses — With regard to the Hurry, in which nothing could be heard distinctly, this is also a groundless Supposition. The Relators say, the Voice was heard; nay, they give us the very Words

P. 220.

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spoken; which shews it was heard *distinctly*. That there was a Tumult or Concourse of People, when he *was brought* into the Stadium or Lifts, προσαχθέντος αὐτοῦ, is true; but the Voice is said to have been heard *before*, while he *was entering* into it, εἰσιόνῃ *; and, besides, a *Voice from Heaven* may well be supposed to have been heard, notwithstanding any Noise or Hurry we can imagine. And how any common human indistinct Voice, from one in the Croud not seen, could be mistaken for miraculous, or represented as a Voice from Heaven; which is this Gentleman's next Supposition; for my part, exceeds all my Power of conceiving: As also, the way of accounting for the Flames being said to have made an Arch round his Body, and not to burn it; which he thinks
 “ might easily happen from the common
 “ Effects of the Wind, or something at least
 “ so like it, as to afford Matter enough to a
 “ superstitious Fancy, to supply the rest.”
 It remains to be proved, that the *Church of Smyrna* was then *superstitious*. Mere Assertions can have no Weight; nor should we think the worse of them on account of any such. The *Enquirer* must not be angry, if

* I observe that in p. 124. where this Relation is recited, the Order of the Sentences is inverted. And the Tumult is placed *before the Voice*, and as the *Martyr was entering the Lifts*; which Piece of Art, I suppose, was used, to give some Countenance to the Supposition here made, which the original Order of the Words would not so well suit.

we tell him, again, that, under the Notion of explaining this antient Testimony, he flatly contradicts it; and that the Authority of Eye-witnesses ought, in all Reason and Justice, to prevail with us more, than any Schemes, which, at the Distance of so many Centuries from the Fact, he thinks proper to raise; even supposing them ever so plausible: And this, I think, is more, than we can allow the present Account to be. How any common Effects of the Wind could make the Fire encompass the Saint's Body as in a Circle, and prevent its having any Power to burn it; so that his Enemies were obliged to dispatch him with a Sword; requires a much stronger Imagination than mine to form any Notion of *. And, I believe, the learned and ingenious Doctor himself found some Difficulty in conceiving this, by his adding the Words, *or something at least so like it*; which leave the Matter *undetermined*, and seem to allow his Readers full Liberty, provided they will reject the Miracles, to imagine whatever they have a mind to. He will not directly say, that the extraordinary Event was owing

* Mr. Jackson has given this so humorous and just a Turn, that I cannot forbear borrowing his Words. "The History says nothing of a Wind, or any thing like it. But I will for once allow the Doctor to raise a Wind. It must, as the Case is represented, be a Wind, that blew not from any one Point of the Compass. For, during this supposed Wind, the Body was encompassed all round with Flames." *Remarks*, p. 12.

altogether to the Wind : He does not assign any other Cause, to which it may fairly be imputed : He would have the Reader's *Fancy to supply the rest* : Tho' really, the only way to solve the Difficulty, is to admit the plain Account of the Miracle.

SECT. 8. *Of Witchcraft, and the Popish Miracles.*

THE Stress, which this Gentleman lays upon the Case of *Witchcraft*, requires us to bestow a Reflection or two upon it. P. 221. He says, "there is not in all History any one
"miraculous Fact so authentically attested,
"as the Existence of Witches—yet the
"Incredibility of the Thing—was found at
"last too strong for all this Force of human
"Testimony ; so that the Belief of Witches
"is now utterly extinct, and quietly
"buried, without involving History in its
"Ruin"—I must here make the same Remonstrance, which I had once before Occasion to make. It seems surprising, that this Gentleman should thus plead against any Fact, which yet he thinks better attested than *all* the Miracles of History. How shall we reconcile this with a Belief of those of the Scriptures ; which, tho', I must suppose, this Gentleman did not intend to include with those related in other Histories, *are not excepted?*

However, not to insist on this, I answer,
that

that the Case of Witchcraft is far from being parallel to the Miracles of the Three first Centuries, and affords much larger Room for Errors and Frauds than these did. To the greatest Part of these it is not *at all* similar. And as to others, a Man may much more easily be deceived or mistaken in ascribing unaccountable Disorders to the Influence of wicked Spirits, than he can be, in attributing sudden Cures and Removals of Diseases, without any Application of Medicine, on Prayer, or by Command only, to the Hand and Power of God. To make these Cases similar enough to found an Argument upon them, we must suppose the Persons said to have been affected and tormented by the Witches, restored at once in the same miraculous Manner; and the Power of injuring, acknowledged to reside in the Witches themselves, as instantaneously and openly taken from them.

Again, with regard to the Case of Witchcraft, there is a Distinction, which deserves to be attended to. We must not confound the general Notion with the particular Instances. The Incredibility does not lie in the former, but the latter. It has been admitted, that there have been in all Ages several ridiculous Accounts of this Nature; and probably the greatest Part of them have been such. But it does not seem so probable, that there *never was* the least Ground or Foundation for any such Stories. The Difficulty is, how to ascertain the few real Facts, and to point them

them out, and distinguish them from among the numberless Cheats and Pretences, which have appeared. And this may reasonably put us upon our Guard; and may make us pleased, that all legal Prosecutions against Persons suspected of this Crime, merely on account of it, are stopped, and taken away. And yet, it does by no means follow, that all the Accounts we have had of such, are Impositions and Forgeries. If therefore *the Belief of Witches is now utterly extinct*, which yet this Gentleman cannot be sure of; the Cause, I suppose, is, that there is not sufficient Evidence to induce wise and reasonable Men to give Credit to the Truth of these *now*; but the Falshood and Improbability of *all* such *in general* does not follow from hence. Nor do I believe, that serious People are inclined to think, that there *never* was any such Thing in the World.

Spectator,
Vol. ii.
N^o. 117.

Mr. *Addison* was certainly a very wise and judicious, as well as ingenious Man. He had no Taint of Superstition or Enthusiasm, nor need any one be ashamed of embracing and declaring the Sentiments which he expressed. I shall give these; which I have the Satisfaction to find conformable to what I have here mentioned. “ When I hear the Relations that are made from all Parts of the “ World, not only from *Norway* and *Lap-* “ *land*, from the *East* and *West-Indies*, but “ from every particular Nation in *Europe*, I “ cannot forbear thinking, that there is such “ an

“ an Intercourse and Commerce with evil
“ Spirits, as that which we express by the
“ Name of Witchcraft. But when I con-
“ sider, that the ignorant and credulous Part
“ of the World abound most in these Rela-
“ tions; and that the Persons among us, who
“ are supposed to engage in such an infer-
“ nal Commerce, are People of a weak Un-
“ derstanding, and crazed Imagination; and
“ at the same time reflect upon the many
“ Impostures and Delusions of this Nature,
“ that have been detected in all Ages; I en-
“ deavour to suspend my Belief, till I hear
“ more certain Accounts, than any which
“ have yet come to my Knowledge. In short,
“ when I consider the Question, whether
“ there are such Persons in the World as
“ those we call Witches, my Mind is divided
“ betwixt the two opposite Opinions; or ra-
“ ther (to speak my Thoughts freely) I be-
“ lieve in general, that there is, and has been,
“ such a thing as Witchcraft; but at the
“ same time can give no Credit to any par-
“ ticular Instance of it.”

And thus much it will be sufficient to an-
swer to this Plea, on which the *Enquirer*
puts so much Stress. It will by no means
follow, that because we certainly know no
Witches *now*, therefore there were none *for-*
merly—or, because there were Multitudes of
Cheats, therefore there were no true In-
stances— or, because we are not sure of any
such

such true Instances, therefore we cannot give Credit to the Appeals of *Tertullian*, and the Accounts which, he and the other Fathers give of the miraculous healing the *Demoniacs*, and other Sick, in their Days; in which there are none of the idle suspicious Circumstances, that generally make a Part of the Cases of Witchcraft; and which are as strongly attested as we can desire by Persons, whom there is no Reason to accuse of such Ignorance, Credulity, and Superstition, as the ordinary Relators of these Cases evidently act under.

All these Conclusions failing, the Parallel between Witchcraft, and the primitive Miracles, will no way hold. Neither the Circumstances, nor the Witnesses, are alike. And therefore I may conclude this Point with saying, that both the *Enquirer's* Premises, and his Conclusion, fall to the Ground.

As to the pious Frauds among the *Roman Catholics*, it can never be proved, that they are at all parallel to the Miracles, the Vindication of which I have undertaken. We need not take the Miracles of the *Abbé de Paris* into particular Consideration. The Reasons are plain, and have been already mentioned, why we may admit the early Miracles, and yet must reject these. We may, however, add, that whether these pretended Miracles are natural or diabolical, is not material. If they were wrought to prove nothing, they do prove nothing: If to prove

Doctrines

Doctrines contrary to Scripture, Reason, or Sense, under a Pretence of Christian Doctrines, they are, and must be, insufficient to prove them.

SECT. 9. Tertullian, &c. vindicated, with
to due Enquiry.

IT is represented as “ a Rule, which is P. 226.
“ prescribed by our primitive Guides ;
“ that the true Disciples of Christ *have no-*
“ *thing more to do with Curiosity and En-*
“ *quiry ; but, when they are once become Be-*
“ *lievers, their sole Business is to believe on.*”
This is given us as a Translation of *Tertullian's*
Words : And the Reader is left to conclude,
that it was the Opinion of this Father, and
of the antient Church, that a blind Deference
to Authority was required at that Time ; that
a proper Examination was discommended
and discouraged ; and that Credulity was the
Character of the Church. This, I think, is
the Judgment, which every common Rea-
der must draw from the Gentleman's Trans-
lation. But will *Tertullian*, supposing he
had been thus unguarded, be allowed to speak
alone for the whole primitive Church in this
Matter ? Were it necessary, it is not difficult
to shew from the early Fathers, that they
were of a different Opinion from this here
represented ; that they invited all to a cool
and fair Examination of Christianity, and
gave

gave the several Pretences of their Adversaries the same. If one Author therefore had said this, we might urge, that he was singular and mistaken; and it would be unkind to suppose, that, at this time of Day, we should be ready to take *him* for our Guide, in Preference to all the others.

De Præ-
scrip. Hæ-
ret. 7, &c.

But what if *Tertullian's* Meaning be mistaken or misrepresented? This, after a Consideration of his Reasoning in this Place, plainly appears to me to be the Case. Having mentioned the several *Heretics*, which then troubled the Church, as having borrowed most of their Notions from the several Schools of the *Philosophers*, with whom the Christians had no Communion; he adds, “Viderint qui Stoicum, et Platicum, et Dialecticum Christianismum protulerunt. Nobis curiositate opus non est post Christum Jesum, nec inquisitione post Evangelium. Cum credimus, nihil desideramus ultra credere. Hoc enim prius credimus, non esse quod ultra credere debeamus.” It is, I think, difficult to mistake the plain Sense of this Passage. *Let them [the Heretics] see to it, who have given us a Stoic, Platonic, or Dialectic Christianity. As to us, who have believed in Christ Jesus, and His Gospel, we have no need to be curiously inquiring into such Schemes and Opinions. Being once fixed in the true Faith, there is nothing more, i. e. no other Articles, which we desire to believe.*

For

For this is Part of our Faith, that there is no other Point, which we ought to believe—

And what is there in all this, which can be objected against? The Heretics would have persuaded the Christians to admit their Pretensions, and would have sent them to Philosophy for farther and better Instruction. As this would have only puzzled common Christians, and have probably prevented their ever fixing their religious Principles at all; and as in such Matters of Duty Philosophy could not safely carry any Christian farther than God had thought proper to reveal; the Father advised them, and, I think, advised them right, that they had no Occasion to undertake such a Search; that the Faith they had received, was perfect and sufficient; that it contained all necessary Articles. I see no Appearance of Credulity in all this, nor any Reason for fastening such an invidious Construction upon the Words, *their sole Business is to believe on*; as if all Enquiry into the Grounds of their Persuasion was excluded.

That this was not *Tertullian's* Design or Sense, is clear from all his subsequent Arguments; in which it is plain, that he supposes a due Examination and Search, as antecedent to the Christian's Faith; but that, when this is once settled, there should be some End of his enquiring; and he should not continue like a Person never satisfied, still seeking into the Merits of every new Pretence, or listening to every

every specious Heretic which appeared, in order to build his Faith. “Unius porro et
 “certi instituti infinita disquisition non potest
 “esse; quærendum est, donec invenias; et
 “credendum ubi inveneris: et nihil amplius,
 “nisi custodiendum, quod credidisti.” &c.
*Christ having instituted one certain Rule of
 Faith and Life, the Search of this cannot be
 infinite and endless. You must therefore seek for
 it, until you find it; you must believe it, when
 you have found it: And then you will have
 nothing to do, but to hold fast what you have
 believed*—The Reader, if he will take the
 Trouble of consulting the Place, will find
 more to the same Purpose; and will, I dare
 say, agree with me, not only, in admiring
 the Wisdom and the Judgment of these
 Maxims of the Father; but in wondering,
 what this Gentleman could see in them wor-
 thy of his Censure or Dislike; or how he
 could represent it *agreeable to the Rule of
 Tertullian, patiently to admit all the modern
 as well as the antient Miracles of the Church.*
 It is very difficult here for Candour itself to
 excuse him. And we must call upon him to
 justify the Learning, or the Honesty, of trans-
 lating *Tertullian* so ill, in order to insinuate
 the most bitter and unjust Reflection against
 such, as do not follow him in his Errors;
viz. that they will admit all modern Miracles.
 We cannot suppose, that this Offence against
 Truth and Decency (for such it is) was owing
 to

to *Ignorance* in the Doctor. We can hardly ascribe it to *Inattention*. And yet, there is no other Cause to impute it to, but *designed Unfairness*. However, when he writes any more on this Subject, I hope he will not forget to acknowledge and correct his Error, and to do Justice both to his Opposers, and to the *African Father*, who have here suffered a manifest Injury under his Hands.

SECT. 10. *Some Concessions of the Enquiry argued from.*

THIS Gentleman, mentioning the Difference between Subjects of common History, and Subjects of a miraculous Kind, observes, “ how forcibly the Prejudices of P. 229: Education, a superstitious Turn of Mind, the Interests of a Party, or the Views of Ambition, are apt to operate on a Defender of those Miracles, which the Government and Religion of his Country are engaged to support.” This is a most sensible and just Remark, and will account itself for most of the pretended Miracles of the *Roman Catholics*. And, farther, it appears to be a strong Confirmation of those related in the Three first Centuries; and shews, why the Credit of these should not be hurt by any Impostures, which may be found out in after Ages. For not one of these Circumstances is found to agree to the Fathers, to whom

A a

we

we have appealed, The *Prejudices of Education* could here have no Place: These were conquered at their Conversion to Christianity — Nothing of a *superstitious Turn* has been proved upon them — The *Interests of a Party*, or the *Views of Ambition*, had no Power over them, who sacrificed Interest, and Life itself, to Truth and Religion. If these Principles had swayed them, they would have continued Heathens; and then they might have attained their Desires — For, lastly, both the *Government* and *Religion of their Countries* were engaged, and with no small Warmth and Zeal, not to support, but to destroy the Belief of these Miracles out of the World — One would think, that such Witnesses as these, who shewed their Regard to Truth and Conscience much more strongly, than by mere Words and Professions, should be allowed to be every way such, as we could wish.

Farther, is it only in Relations of Miracles, that these several Principles are known to byass Writers? Do they not also operate, and that powerfully, in the compiling other Parts of History? Is it not to these, that we owe the great Differences in the Relations of common Facts, and the great Uncertainty even of modern History? And, when we have Reason to think an Author under the Influence of such Motives, do not we justly suspect the Truth of what he relates? So that this Inconvenience is not peculiar to the Accounts

counts of Miracles; nor does it render these more improbable, or unworthy of Credit, than those of ordinary Events. And as to Writers of Sense and Credit, we may and ought to depend upon their Narrations, be the Facts natural or supernatural.

This Author proceeds to observe, “that
“human Nature has always been the same;
“agitated by the same Appetites and Pas-
“sions, and liable to the same Excesses and
“Abuses of them, in all Ages and Countries
“of the World; so that our Experience of
“what passes in the present Age, will be the
“best Comment on what is delivered to
“us concerning the past.” But, surely, *all*
Witnesses are not worthy of the *same* Credit,
nor can be supposed to act on the *same* Mo-
tives and Principles. Nor can it be the least
Argument, that real Miracles were not work-
ed in the first Ages; because we see false
Claims and Pretensions to them made in our
own. What then, if “all these modern
“Pretensions we readily ascribe to their
“true Cause, to the Artifices and Craft of a
“few, playing upon the Credulity, the Su-
“perstition, and the Enthusiasm, of the Ma-
“ny, for the sake of some private Interest?”
Before we can condemn the Antients on this
Account, the Case should be shewn to be the
same in all its Circumstances; or else it will
be most vain and idle thus to declaim and
flourish upon *human Nature's being always*

the same; which way of talking would set aside the Belief of the Miracles of the Gospel, as well as those of the Fathers; And indeed any Relations of Facts whatever, be they ever so well attested, must fall into Disrepute, if Instances of Frauds, under the Colour of such Facts, be enough to overthrow them —

“ When we read therefore, that the same
 “ Things were performed by the Antients,
 “ and for the same Ends, of acquiring a Su-
 “ periority of Credit, or Wealth, or Power,
 “ over their Fellow-Creatures; how can we
 “ possibly hesitate, to impute them to the
 “ same Cause, of Fraud and Imposture?”

Right, if the Gentleman had proved this to have been the Case: But where, except in this very Book, do we read, that the Antients, I mean, of the three First Centuries, performed these Works, *for the same Ends, of acquiring a Superiority of Credit, or Wealth, or Power?* This is neither a just, nor a probable Charge; neither agreeable to the Characters of the Men, nor to the Condition of their Times. Such Ends and Views were very far from their Thoughts; Credit, Wealth, and Power, could never be the Aims of Martyrs and Confessors. And therefore we may much more reasonably reverse the Conclusion now before us. Since the antient Relaters of Miracles were so very different from the modern ones; since we cannot suspect their Designs to be the same; how can we possibly,

bly, tho' all other Circumstances were alike, which yet they are not, impute their Works to one and the same Cause?

I am not arguing for an *implicit* Belief in Authority, "in all Cases, whether miraculous or natural, without any Rule of discerning the Credible from the Incredible." I am no more against making a *fair* and *free Enquiry*, and using our Reason and Judgment soberly and impartially, than the Doctor himself is. But I am not for suspecting, in general, miraculous Accounts, on no other Foundation, than their being miraculous; or for disbelieving them, either because we see no such wrought in our own Days; or because we see Pretences to them, which are easy to be disproved. The Rules for discerning false Miracles are intimated above. By observing these we shall be well able to distinguish Truth from Imposture; much better than by taking this Gentleman's Method, which is "to distinguish—between Miracle
 " and Nature; the extraordinary Acts of God,
 " and the ordinary Transactions of Man; to
 " suspend our Belief of the one, while, on the
 " same Testimony, we grant it freely to the
 " other; and to require a different Degree of
 " Evidence for each, in proportion to the
 " different Degrees of their Credibility." This to me appears to carry the Face of Prejudice against Miracles, in general; to suppose, that they always require better Authority,

P. 231;

rity, and stronger Attestations, than other Facts; that in general, and in themselves, they are not so credible as others *; and that we may and ought to suspend our Belief of them, without any Reasons to induce us to do so, tho' we will freely believe other Actions on the same Testimony. Whereas, since Miracles are Facts, they must rest on the same Evidence and Foundation with all other Facts; they must be proved by Testimony; and where they are not attended with any of those Circumstances, which will set them aside at once; or, at least, render them suspected; the same Testimony, which will be a reasonable Ground of our Assent to ordinary Actions, may also challenge and command our Assent also to extraordinary ones. And therefore, upon the Whole, as I hope it has appeared, that this is the Case with regard to the Miracles of the Fathers, which have been the Subject of this Examination; I conclude, *that we have no Reason to be-*

* Should it be said, as perhaps it will, that some Allowance should be made for the greater Evidence required of Things in themselves less likely; I answer, that I think this may be granted in general. But, I think at the same time, that Miracles, in some Circumstances, are not less likely, than other Facts of a material and important Nature. However, the Difference of the Evidence for these and others depends on some Difference in circumstantial Points, and not upon the supposed Superiority of Character in the Relator of Miracles, so as that we cannot ever trust a Man for these, whom we should readily believe for any common Events of Moment. It is not then a due Examination, but an undistinguishing Suspicion, which is here excluded.

lieve,

lieve, from any thing Dr. Middleton has urged to the contrary, that no such Powers were continued to the Church after the Days of the Apostles.

There is one Particular, which I could have wished this Author had enlarged upon; that is, the true substantial Evidence, which he believes to be sufficient to build our Faith of real Miracles upon, and wherein its Superiority over a just Evidence of natural Facts consists. We know, that there are many, who run down all Miracles in general, not excepting those of the Scriptures, as absurd and incredible. We also know, that there are several weak People, who are exposed to their Attacks; and for *whose* sake, to guard *them* against Delusions, such a particular Explication would have been very useful and necessary. However fixed the *Enquirer's* own Faith is, the Generality of Christians cannot be supposed to have the same Strength of Reason and Judgment. Consequences, which he does not see, or does despise, may possibly affect and stagger some of inferior Penetration. And as there is a possible Danger of this, too much Care could not have been taken to prevent it. At present, as Miracles are said to require a different Degree of Evidence, than common Facts, even of Importance, do; and as we are no way told, what this different, this greater Evidence is, with which humble and ingenuous Enquirers

ought to rest contented; here seems to be a *most material* Point left open and undetermined, which ignorant People may not be able to supply of themselves; which even Men of Capacity may not exactly explain, *according to the Doctor's Scheme*; and which Infidels will probably make an Handle of, to take Men off from the Belief of the Miracles of the Gospel, which appear to me to stand upon the same Bottom, and to have the self-same Attestation, as the other ordinary and natural Facts recorded therein. For Instance, what greater Evidence have we to believe, that our Blessed Saviour Himself worked Miracles, than we have, that He was crucified *? It will therefore be but Justice in this Gentleman to Christianity, to the World, and to himself, to be more full and explicit on this important Head; to shew, what Proof is sufficient to command, at any time, our Belief of Miracles; to remove all Stumbling-blocks out of the way of the Simple and Un-
 wary; and to cut off every *Occasion* of Triumph from them who so much desire *Occasion*.

Dr. Middleton concludes his Treatise with a wild Saying of *Fontenelle*, " Give me but
 " half a dozen Persons, whom I can per-
 " suade, that it is not the Sun, which makes

* In the *introductory Discourse*, where we have a general Account of the Evidence of the *New Testament* Miracles, I see nothing *peculiar* to the Evidence of these, *above* that of the other Facts mentioned therein. See p. 43, or p. 42, 43. of this *Vindication*.

“ our Day-light, and I should not despair
 “ of drawing whole Nations to embrace the
 “ same Belief,” &c. How could he possibly
 adopt and approve of so extravagant an Assertion,
 for which its Author did not escape Censure and
 Suspicions, as if he had some latent ill Design
 against Religion? I shall recite at large the admirable
 Words of the *Answer* to him; which this Author may
 apply to himself, as far as he is concernd. P. 113.
 “ I know
 “ not very well what you mean by that, nor
 “ whether your Pique be only against Oracles.
 “ But this I know, that a very learned and
 “ understanding Person of my Acquaintance, having
 “ seen this Passage of your Book, found some
 “ Venom hidden in it, which gave him great
 “ Offence. But, without staying to penetrate into
 “ your Intentions, I desire you to tell me, if you
 “ have found in History any Example of an Error
 “ of this Kind, established in the Manner you
 “ mention. Sure you build very much upon the
 “ Stupidity of Men. Yet it seems to me, that they
 “ do not so easily give themselves up to all that
 “ one would persuade them, particularly in Things
 “ contrary to their Sense and Experience. If they
 “ have never so little Wit and Understanding, they
 “ require Proofs and Reasons. Nor is this all.
 “ They also upon these Occasions desire Wonders
 “ and Miracles, either true, or at least, appearing
 “ to be so. It
 “ would

“ would indeed be a very great Curiosity, to
 “ see which way you would go to work, to
 “ persuade five or six Persons, that it is not
 “ the Sun which makes the Day: And when
 “ you should have gained your Point, it
 “ would yet be a greater Curiosity, to see
 “ what way these five or six Persons would
 “ take to persuade whole Nations of the
 “ same Error. They must for this Purpose
 “ be at the same time infinitely stupid, and
 “ extremely ingenious; to give themselves up
 “ to so gross and palpable an Error, and yet
 “ be able to persuade whole Nations of it.”

CONCLUSION.

TIS time now to release the Reader.
 And, I hope, he will believe me, when
 I assure him, that what I have written on
 this Subject does not proceed from any Spirit
 of Contention or Envy. I easily allow the
 Doctor's superior Learning and Abilities;
 and cannot but lament, when I see them
 employed in reviving some Cavils, and
 adding other new ones, against the early
 Saints and Martyrs of the Christian Church.
 False Reasonings, recommended by an agree-
 able Style, are the more capable of doing
 Mischief among the Unthinking *. It be-

* Οσο αν τις αμεινον λεγη, παρανομα γεγραφως, τοσοω
 μεταορας οργης τευξεται. *Æschines.*

comes the more necessary to discover and confute them. How far I have succeeded in this Attempt, I leave to others to judge. If I have been so happy as to have the Truth on my Side, which I presume and hope, will generally be allowed, this alone will make up for all other Disadvantages. I am not conscious of having ever misrepresented the Sense of the *Enquiry*, or treated the Author of it unbecomingly. Rudeness and ill Language are no more justifiable in public Disputation, than they are in private Company; and they weaken any Argument, and prejudice any Cause, rather than give Force or Assistance to them.

It would not be fair, that the Fathers should suffer for the Defects of any one, who engages in their Defence. And therefore, if the Reader should not be perfectly satisfied with every thing I have offered to vindicate them, let it be thought *my* Fault, not *theirs*; and let him have recourse to the other great Writers, *Tillemont, Baltus, Cave, &c.* who have appeared as their Advocates; as well as to the other Gentlemen, who have been concerned in this Debate before me. As to *smaller* Slips, and Mistakes, should any such appear in these Papers, I rely upon his Candour to excuse them. And shall take my Leave in the Words of the Author of the xv. 38. second Book of the *Maccabees*. "If I have
" done well, and as is fitting the Story, it is
" that,

“ that, which I desired; but if slenderly
 “ and meanly, it is that, which I could at-
 “ tain unto.” Or in the Words of the
Athenian Orator just cited, of which these
 last, with a very little Alteration, may be
 thought a Translation. *Και ει μεν καλως και*
αξιος του αδικηματος κατηγορηκα, ειπον ως εβου-
λομην· ει δε ενδεσσεως, ως εδυναμην.

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THE INDEX.

Pr. stands for *Pref.* *N.* for *Note.*

In Imitation of the Doctor, I have subjoined a very full and large Index; which will render the Treatise more useful, not only by making it easy to turn to any Passage which the Reader may at any time have occasion to consult; but also by helping his Memory, as he will here find the principal Articles and Points, which are examined and considered, thrown together under proper Heads. So that this Index may, in some measure, serve for an Abridgment of the Work.

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